

## Interview with Robert W. Duemling

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ROBERT W. DUEMLING

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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*Q: Before we start a review of your Foreign Service career, I wonder whether you can give us a short description of your background.*

DUEMLING: I grew up in Northern Indiana—Fort Wayne—until I was thirteen years old at the beginning of World War II. My father, who was a dermatologist, joined the US Navy during W.W.II and was assigned to the Naval Hospital in San Diego, California. He moved the family there and I lived there from age thirteen to seventeen. By the end of the War, we had all become so pleased with Southern California as opposed to Northern Indiana that my father agreed upon discharge that he would establish his dermatology practice in San Diego. My family in effect was transplanted by World War II. I graduated from high school in San Diego in 1946, just after the end of W.W.II and then went to Yale for four years, majoring in American Studies. Upon graduation, I won a fellowship to Cambridge University and spent a year at St. John's College studying architectural history. Through my American studies I had become interested in architecture and art as an expression of social and intellectual history. I was more interested in the intellectual aspects of architectural history. I became so interested that after that year at Cambridge, I went back to Yale, spending two years in the graduate school getting an M.A. in the History of Art. In those days, and perhaps still, Yale would only accept doctoral candidates.

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I was therefore technically a Ph.D. candidate, but after two years and an M.A. I decided that I had satisfied essentially my intellectual interests in that field and I really wanted to get back to a more operational life. At that point, I had a deferment because although the Korean War had begun, I was a graduate student, but when I got my M.A. in 1953, I chose to enter the military, although I suspect that I could have stayed out. I did that because I felt I had a “deferred” obligation. So I went to the Navy's O.C.S. in Newport, starting in November, 1953. I was a “pre-designated” into the intelligence program. I graduated from Newport on April 1, 1954 and then went for some additional training for intelligence officers. This is a very interesting field in the Navy because it has to do with determining the strike missions of aircraft. I was assigned to a squadron which was based in San Diego—my old hometown—but also deployed to the Far East to Atsugi—the air station outside Yokohama. This was a former Japanese air station taken over after the War by the Americans. This particular squadron, which was designated VC-6, was a squadron which had the capability of delivering both H- and A-bombs. Therefore, my job as an intelligence officer was to plan the missions to deliver these weapons over designated targets. There is a whole targeting program shared by the Air Force, the Navy and perhaps the Army as well. There were designated targets. This is back in the 1954-55 period when US relations with China were chilly. My squadron had as assigned targets primarily airfields in both China and the Maritime provinces of the Soviet Union, near Vladivostok. This was of course still peace time, but that is when you train for war. Basically, therefore, we were training pilots in how to plan a flight path into these targets avoiding radar and other protective devices in so far as possible. My job was to plan attack missions theoretically using both hydrogen and atom bombs, both of which were in the inventory. I did that both at Atsugi and on board aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific. I spent a total of a year deployed in the Far East.

*Q: In another interview, it was pointed out that the US military during the Matsu-Quemoy crisis discussed rather blithely the possibility of taking out enemy airfields unconcerned by*

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*the collateral casualties that might be inflicted on millions of civilians. Were you, as a junior officer, cognizant of this problem?*

DUEMLING: The attitude of the military at the time was significantly different from what it is today. You have to remember that in 1953-55, when I was in the Navy, we were still very much in the midst of the Cold War. We were responding to the attack that had taken place on the Korean Peninsula. Several years had passed since the Berlin blockade of the late '40s, but there was still a very great concern throughout the US government and its military planners that we could conceivably face a very serious military threat again at any time. Therefore, the assumption was that these strategic targets, as opposed to tactical ones, would only be attacked in the case of a full scale war. The attitude of the squadron to which I was assigned was that the defense of the United States was paramount and that whatever was required to defend the US would be done. If the President of the US ordered that this would happen, it would happen. I am quite sure we did not consider very much the prospect of civilian casualties as a result of our actions. Incidentally, these airfields were in very sparsely populated areas, mostly on the coastline of China and the USSR. That isn't to say that nuclear clouds wouldn't be blown over populated areas; they certainly would have been. But that particular consideration was not in people's minds, despite the fact that we lived and operated from Japan which had both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I visited both of them when I was a young naval officer and saw the museums there which recorded the devastation that had taken place. Many years later, when I returned to Japan as a foreign service officer, one of my responsibilities in our Tokyo Embassy was to be the liaison with the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) which is the US government's organization in Hiroshima with a branch in Nagasaki to study the effects of the atomic bombs on the victims. It also had a clinic to treat the medical consequences of those devastating weapons. So I found myself looking at the other side of the proposition many years later as a foreign service officer.

*Q: How did you get into the Foreign Service?*

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DUEMLING: While I was in the Navy, I met a friend who also subsequently joined the Foreign Service and became an Ambassador—George Roberts. George and I shared a bunk room on one of the aircraft carriers—the Hancock—when I went aboard with my squadron. In casual conversations with George, I asked him what he planned to do when he got out of the Navy and he said that he wanted to be a diplomat. So I asked what that was. George then described to me what diplomacy was and I asked how one joins the game. He explained the Foreign Service and its examination. I thought that sounded very interesting because while I was an undergraduate I had been very interested in international affairs. I was the chairman of an international affairs discussion group and also very active on the daily newspaper—"The Yale Daily News". That got me involved in day-to-day activities and current events. Therefore, while I was in the Navy, after talking to George, I took the Foreign Service written exams. I passed them and then took the orals and passed them. When I left the Navy, I had some options and spent the summer of 1957 looking at them. I could have returned to Yale to complete my Ph.D. work and then head for an academic career. I went to New Haven to discuss this avenue with my old mentors. They encouraged me to follow this path. I also was interested in journalism and through some friends I had an interview at "Fortune" magazine, which indicated an interest in me. But I also went to Washington to talk to the Foreign Service people. They said, that since I had passed the exams, they could offer me an appointment in October or November. I considered all this for two or three months and finally decided that the Foreign Service offered me the opportunity to pursue more of the matters in which I was particularly interested. Specifically, the Foreign Service and a career in diplomacy offered the opportunity for constant learning, the expansion of one's intellectual horizons—new languages to learn, new cultures to become acquainted with, new political and economic situations to master. The potential intellectual stimulation of the Foreign Service appealed to me very much. The second important aspect was the opportunity to write. I have always enjoyed writing and you do a lot of writing in the Foreign Service—telegrams, airgrams, reports, memcons, etc. The third thing that appealed to me was the travel, moving around the world, being involved in affairs and current events and with other countries. I have

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traveled all my life—as a child, my parents took me on numerous trips (my mother was a history buff and I took up her interests). Travel and history go well together. It was all of these aspects that finally persuaded me to join the Foreign Service, which offered me this range of opportunities for which I felt a particular attraction.

*Q: You entered in 1957. What was your first assignment?*

DUEMLING: My first assignment was in the Secretariat. I finished the A-100 basic officer course and I was assigned into the Executive Secretariat (S/S). S/S was a staff which essentially works for the senior officers of the Department. It works for the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary and the principal Under Secretaries. You are constantly dealing with the paper flow between the Department, the Foreign Service and the leadership of the Department. Conversely, also of course the flow back down—the decision memoranda that have to be implemented. It is a very interesting staff which keeps in touch with the senior officers of the Department and with the policy questions that are of current importance in the Department. It is of course a superb place to start a Foreign Service career. I think anybody who serves in S/S considers it a prime opportunity to learn something.

*Q: This was your first assignment in the Foreign Service. What lessons did you learn about reporting and field operations that served you well later?*

DUEMLING: You learn a lot about how to manipulate the system. First of all, you learn immediately what the structure of the Department is and how it inter-relates with the Embassies. You come to understand how those telegrams come in from all over the world. The system of course is different today from it was in 1957. My first assignment in the Secretariat was, together with another officer, to edit the "Morning Summary" of the most important telegrams that had been received from all over the world during the preceding night. We came extremely early in the morning—about 4 a.m.—and we would sift through all the telegrams. In those days, you were looking at actual pieces of paper that had

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printed on them the messages from overseas. My colleague and I would physically go through these stacks of telegrams. It was our judgment as to what was key. You might well ask how a junior Foreign Service officer on his first assignment got assigned to a job like that. It was like being a newspaper editor. It doesn't take very long to learn what is important and what isn't. There may be some subtleties that you may miss, but major overnight developments are not going to be terribly subtle. We would read through all the material and write brief summaries of the telegrams. We prepared a document that had to be available for the senior officers by eight o'clock in the morning. That was a document that might be as long as five or six pages. It would be made up of these precis of perhaps ten different items. You would attach the full telegram to the back of the document so that the persons reading the summary, if they were interested, could read the full text. You learn very quickly the virtue of succinctness, the importance of being direct and putting the priorities in the right order and of offering precise assessments as well as proposals for action. You got some feel for the culture of the institution—the kind of issues and problems that are appealing and which are of concern and which aren't, which issues will be dealt with at highest levels and which would be pushed down the line. You get a good feel for that when you are in the Secretariat. Serving there hones your presentation skills: you learn how to write to the point; you learn how to draft things with precision and succinctness. You learn how to present a subject in a way that the person to whom it is directed will be able to deal with it and make some decisions. You get an idea of priorities—what is of concern and what isn't. Later on in my career I could frame things in a way that I thought would enhance the likelihood of attracting attention both through format and language and the organization of the material. That was process in large measure.

*Q: Your first overseas assignment was to Rome in 1960 as a political officer. What were your responsibilities?*

DUEMLING: When I was coming to the end of my normal two year assignment in the Secretariat, the standard personnel system was cranking up an onward assignment. I was supposed to go to Trinidad. I was rather pleased with that because at the time there was

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a lot of discussion about a Caribbean association of states which would involve Trinidad, Jamaica and Barbados. It looked like an interesting development. One morning I was delivering the "Morning Summary" to Loy Henderson's office. He was an Under Secretary and one of two or three senior people in the Department. His staff assistant, who was a very able and promising officer, asked me where I was being assigned. I told him that it was Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. He thought that something better could be worked out. He thought it was not good enough and wanted to find something more interesting for me. I said I thought that it could be very interesting, but he disagreed. The next thing I heard was a phone call from the Office of Personnel. They told me that my assignment to Trinidad would be canceled. I told them that I had just been down to the Office of Transportation making travel arrangements and that I was excited by the prospects of going to Trinidad. Personnel said that this assignment was canceled, but could not tell me what else they had up their sleeves. I demurred and they finally admitted that although it was not yet final, they had an assignment in Rome in mind. I didn't say anything. The voice at the other end of the phone finally said: "Hello. Are you there?". I admitted that I was and then the voice asked whether I wasn't pleased. I said: "I am not sure. The situation in the Caribbean looks interesting and I am not sure that I am that pleased about going to Rome". The voice on the other end finally said: "You are crazy". I agreed to go to Rome and became the Ambassador's aide. Having just left the Secretariat, I had all the skills necessary to be the Ambassador's aide. The Ambassador at this time was Zellerbach, a political appointee from San Francisco. A wonderful man, who had been the chief of the US Marshall Plan mission in Italy. He had been a very successful industrialist—the Crown-Zellerbach paper corporation. He was a huge success in Italy because the whole Italian business community respected him very highly for his successes in American business. He knew all about the Italian economy from his days in the Marshall Plan. He was therefore a very successful Ambassador. I arrived in the summer of 1960. In the fall of 1960, Jack Kennedy defeated Nixon and therefore Mr. Zellerbach as a Republican appointee left the following Spring. He was succeeded by Frederick Reinhardt, who was a career officer who had been briefly US Ambassador in Cairo before Kennedy assigned him



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to Rome. Fred was a super person, a very able officer who went on to be a great success as Ambassador to Italy. I worked for Fred as his staff aide for about another year at which time I moved to the Political Section. I spent a year and half in that Section. So I was in Rome for a total of three years.

*Q: Would you agree that there has been a considerable amount of political micro-reporting from Rome on a political situation that has been essentially stable since 1948? Were we getting too involved in the minutiae of Italian politics?*

DUEMLING: That is a very long story. We manipulated the Italian elections of 1948 in order to forestall a Communist regime. That experience deeply conditioned the involvement of the Embassy toward the whole Italian political scene. What I remember vividly from that period was the whole business of the opening to the Left—The “Apertura-a-Sinistra”. That was considered a very controversial proposition. Should we or shouldn't we encourage the idea of the opening to the Left? That issue deeply divided the American Embassy staff. Our Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at the time was Outerbridge Horsey, who felt very strongly that the opening to the Left was a kind of Trojan Horse of the Communists. He very much opposed the idea. Another officer in the Political section— younger than Horsey—thought it made a lot of sense. He was in close touch with the Socialist Party. In the Political Section we were all assigned to specific parties, so that collectively we had a broad view of the Italian political scene. We had no connections with the Communist Party, but we met with the Christian Democrats, who formed the government, but also with the various branches of the Socialist Party, the Republican Party, the Liberal Party, etc. I suppose what happens is that with that degree of complexity in the local political situation, it draws the Embassy' political reporters more and more into complex assessments and evaluations. It becomes somewhat like counting angels on the head of a pin. It gets carried to extremes. There was no question that the issue of the proper US role in Italian domestic politics was a very major issue. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.—historian, Kennedy aide—was very interested in political machinations. He came to Italy and made some political contacts—White House authorized—, but he was not in



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touch with the American Embassy. He talked to some people on the political scene in Italy. It aroused the ire of Outerbridge Horsey, who was at this time the Chargé d'affaires, between Zellerbach and Reinhardt. The very idea of a US representative visiting a foreign country officially without contacting the Embassy infuriated Horsey. Reinhardt took a more balanced view of that situation. My own involvement in this affair was very minor. I was the low man on the totem pole in the Political Section. I was put in charge of writing routine messages, biographic reporting and other pedestrian assignments.

*Q: In 1963, you were assigned to Kuala Lumpur. How did that come about?*

DUEMLING: I had been in the Navy in Japan and became tremendously interested in Japan and particularly in Japanese culture and society. So much so that when I left Japan at the end of my navy assignment, I said to myself that I had to leave Japan right away because if I didn't I would become a Japanophile who would settle down and just get deeper and deeper into the society. I did get out of it, but when I came into the Foreign Service and was given an opportunity to study a "hard language", I decided to shy away from it and not study Japanese because it was too soon after my entrance into the Foreign Service. I wanted to get a broader view of the Foreign Service before plunging back into Japanese affairs. But I was very interested in the Far East as a result of my naval experience and my visits to a number of countries out there aboard the aircraft carrier. So I told a friend in the Personnel Office—Christian Chapman—that I would love to go back to the Far East after my Rome tour. He agreed and since he was in charge of assignments into the Far East, he found me an assignment in Kuala Lumpur which was not a language-requirement country, having been a former British colony. Knowing Malay was therefore not essential. So I was assigned to KL to be a one-man Consular Section. At that time, before the "track" system, it was felt that a junior officer should obtain experience in different functions. Having served as a political officer in Rome and knowing that I would prefer to remain in the political area for the rest of my career, it was important that I become acquainted with the other Foreign Service facets and aspects. I was therefore very pleased to get this assignment as a one-man Consular Section. That was much

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better than having to go to a huge Embassy in a visa mill where you would get a much more limited experience. This way I would be performing all the functions of a Consular Section—protection and welfare, immigrant and visitors visas, passports, citizenship. So for one year, that was my job and I learned a lot, getting the consular functions “under my belt”. There was very good rotational program at our Embassy in K.L. and the DCM there, Don McCue, was very good about trying to give a variety of experience to the junior officers in the Embassy. He rotated people throughout. So after I had been there in the Consular Section for one year, he assigned me to the Economic Section and I spent about eight months there, responsible for all the basic reporting on the natural rubber industry and the tin industry which were the Malaysian principal export commodities at that time. That was very good economic experience. It got me involved with US exports and imports into Malaysia. I learned a little bit about the American business community in Malaysia. Then our Ambassador, Jim Bell, decided that I would be the right guy to become the Consul in charge of the small Consulate we had in East Malaysia, in Kuching, Sarawak. Therefore, I went to Borneo, which is divided one-third —the old British Part—consisting of Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah (Sarawak and Sabah joined Malaysia) and the other two thirds consisting of Kalimantan which is part of Indonesia. I went to run the Kuching consulate, which no longer exists. I was responsible for three areas—Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah— reporting across the board on political and economic issues. That was very interesting. This was at the time of so-called “confrontation” between Malaysia and Indonesia. The only place where the two countries abutted was in Borneo, so that when I was there, there were Indonesian raids across the border into Sarawak. That was never much of a war. It was a low-level guerrilla activity.

*Q: Was there a feeling that the incursions were not serious or could be contained?*

DUEMLING: The thought was that it could be contained without too much trouble. Most people felt that it was primarily posturing on the part of the Indonesians. No one thought that they would do much. In the meanwhile, there were these guerrilla activities. There was an attack, for example, on a police station seven miles outside of Kuching during

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which several people were killed. There was always the concern about infiltrators. No one thought it would lead to full scale war, but at the same time it was not anything that you could just ignore. My territory also included Brunei. In those days it was a British protectorate. It is now independent and we have an Embassy there. I did have the fun, while Consul in Kuching, of representing the US President at the wedding of the current Sultan of Brunei, who was then about 21 years old, marrying a young lady of about 18. I doubt very much that the President knew that he was being represented at the marriage of the Sultan and in fact I don't remember any particular directions from Washington or the Embassy on what to do. I just figured that we ought to have be there. I had to give some gift; I went to Singapore and bought an American made silver cream and sugar set. That was given on behalf of the President of the United States. This was all on my own initiative. This is the sort of stuff that when you are in the Foreign Service, way out in the boondocks somewhere, you take the initiative.

*Q: Did we show much concern with the fighting? Did we try to bolster the Malaysian side?*

DUEMLING: Yes, we were. We didn't want to be drawn into the dispute publicly, but essentially we supported the independence of the Malaysian states against any potential Indonesian aspirations to take over Malaysia. We were supportive of the Malaysian cause. One tends to forget the facts and the mood of the situation at the time. We forget the Communist international of 1948 and their plans to foment political unrest and disorder in various places. One of those places was Malaysia. There had been the so called "emergency" which was a serious insurrection which took place in Malaysia throughout the early 1950's. It was not until it was effectively brought under control that the British granted independence to Malaya in 1957. There was still concern when I was serving in Malaysia and Borneo for the vestigial Communist party movement working out in the jungles. There was a certain amount of political agitation going on. So there was some interest and concern for what could happen.

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*Q: Do you have any reflections about our Embassy in Indonesia, which was then under Ambassador Howard Jones, who was viewed as being too pro-Sukarno?*

DUEMLING: There was a famous episode when Jones sat on the platform at a big political rally with Sukarno. When introduced to the crowd by Sukarno, Jones raised his fist and shouted “Defeat Malaysia” in Indonesian. This was totally unauthorized and we thought that Jones had been carried away. It was totally ill-advised. We laughed about it because we thought it was slightly loony. There was a certain tension between our Embassies in Malaysia and in Indonesia and our Consul General in Singapore as well. There were three different posts involved in the Malaysia-Indonesia dispute: one was the Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, one was the Consulate General in Singapore and one was the Embassy in Jakarta. It was interesting to watch the telegraphic traffic emanating from these three posts because they were each reporting on the viewpoints of the states to which they were accredited. There was undoubtedly a certain amount of “clientitis” creeping into the reporting. There were some small, subtle digs from each post about the others. Singapore joined Malaya in 1963 to form Malaysia. I arrived in Kuala Lumpur just after that event had taken place. Therefore, one of the factors on the American side, was the Consul General in Singapore which had been an independent post, but after the formation of Malaysia, had become a subordinate post to the Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. That was a hard pill to swallow for the Consul General in Singapore. That post had been independent for a long time. That situation did not last very long because within a couple of years Singapore left Malaysia. That was a fascinating evolution. I was in a position to see that situation in considerable detail because shortly after I arrived in K.L., I met the British Ambassador—High Commissioner—and his wife. We became life time friends. We remained very friendly after all of us had left K.L. They invited me to their daughter's wedding at Eton College some years later. I remained in close touch with them until they died. In any case, I became good friends with Lord and Lady Head. He had a very distinguished career—he had been one of the youngest Brigadiers in the British Army. He left the British Army at the end of World War II in order to go into politics. He was the Minister of Defense in

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the Eden Cabinet at the time of the Suez Canal crisis in 1956. When Harold MacMillan shuffled the Cabinet, Lord Head declined to stay at Defense because the Prime Minister was planning to reduce the size of the British Army and, somewhat like Winston Churchill, Head didn't want to preside over that. He then began a diplomatic career—he was High Commissioner in Nigeria and then Malaysia. He was a breath of fresh air in Malaysia because despite the fact that he was a Viscount, he had started as a commoner. His wife was born into nobility, being the daughter of the Earl of Shaftesbury. Both were vigorous types. Lady Head was very liberal and despite her ancestry, in manner, speech and dress was a very plain woman. She wore plain dresses; she wore flat shoes, she wore a kerchief around her head. She thought that Malaysia was an extremely interesting place. She got involved in many activities—she went to political meetings. While her husband was dealing with the Prime Minister and other high level officials, she was out in the boondocks. They were quite a political couple. We played a lot of tennis together on their court. During this very turbulent political period, one of the Heads' frequently unannounced visitors was Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore who made Singapore independent again in 1965. I was at the British residence on the day that in effect the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, threw Singapore out of Malaysia. I'll never forget Lee Kuan Yew rushing to the British residence unannounced because he was in such close touch with the British government about these problems. He was in tears. He consulted with the High Commissioner and then left. I asked Lord Head what was going on and he told me confidentially that Lee just had a session with the Malaysian Prime Minister who told Lee that he thought that he (Lee) had violated a gentlemen's agreement regarding the forthcoming elections. The Prime Minister thought that Lee's party, which was based in Singapore, would not contest any elections on the mainland. But apparently Lee, after having made that agreement, went back to his own Cabinet which over-ruled him. It decided that their party would contest in two or three constituencies on the mainland. That was obviously contrary to the agreement originally reached and the Tunku threw Singapore out of Malaysia. This anecdote is interesting in part because there are many versions of how the rupture between Malaysia and Singapore took place. One version had

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it that Singapore and Lee took the initiative to opt out of Malaysia. That was not the case. My sense was that Lee would have preferred to stay in Malaysia because at the time there was considerable question about the economic viability of a little city-state like Singapore. Singapore then, as contrasted to now, was not the economic major player. It was a busy little place with a certain amount of commerce and some manufacturing, but it was nothing like Hong Kong. What has of course happened is that Singapore has become the “other Hong Kong”. With the political changes that will take place before the end of the century in H.K., Singapore may become the pre-eminent financial center of East Asia. None of that of course was the case back then.

*Q: You went back to Washington in 1966 at the height of the Vietnam War, to become Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for East Asia. What were your responsibilities?*

DUEMLING: I was asked to return after one year in Borneo to become the economic officer for the Malaysia-Singapore desk. There wasn't too much to do in that job. I was underemployed. I worked closely with Bob Barnett, who was the Bureau's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs. Barnett was intellectually very stimulating and therefore I enjoyed that aspect of my job. The rest was pretty boring. Fortunately, Bill Bundy, the Assistant Secretary, needed a new special assistant to run his office. He had spied me and knew that I was underemployed. He therefore asked if I would be willing to fill the job and I readily agreed. This was a little bit of a curse, having been in the Secretariat at the start of my career, being a special assistant to an Ambassador soon thereafter and now returning to a special assistant to an Assistant Secretary. It tags you as a “staff guy”.

*Q: But it all tagged you as a “comer”. It put you on a fast track for moving up.*

DUEMLING: Correct. And that was the advantage of it. After one week on the job with Bill, I went to him and pointed out that he was primarily occupied with Vietnam, although

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his area of responsibility covered all of East Asia. I added that he needed someone who could keep track of what else was happening in the area. It was a role that I could play. I would help somewhat on Vietnam, but essentially I would be his eyes and ears on all other matters in the area to alert him to when he should get involved in issues. Of course, much that was happening in the area was related to Vietnam, but still, there were a lot of things happening in Japan, Australia, Indonesia and China that required attention. I told him that I would focus on that and not get involved deeply in Vietnam. Bill Bundy agreed and that is the way it worked out. I worked for Bill and subsequently for Marshall Green—a change prompted by a political change in the White House. I started working for Bill beginning in 1968 until early 1970 over a period of about two and half years. What was interesting about it was that in those days, more importantly than now, there were inter-agency groups—called Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) and Regional Interdepartmental Group (RIG)—at differing organizational levels. They drew together the key players from the various agencies interested in foreign affairs. The chair was always the State Department's regional Assistant Secretary. In my case, Bill Bundy chaired the inter-agency group on East Asia. Ranking officers from the National Security Council (NSC), CIA, International Security Affairs (ISA-Defense), the Joint Chiefs, USIA, and AID. This was a policy coordinating group. I was the Executive Secretary of the group. I organized the meetings, the agenda and so forth. Another thing I did when I worked for Bill was to get the academic community together about twice per year. Bundy had a scholarly bent and wanted to meet with academic experts on the Far East. It was an advisory group. We had two panels: one on China and the other on all the other parts of the Far East. They overlapped somewhat with three or four persons of a total of about twelve for each panel, sitting on both serving as a kind of hinge. These were very distinguished scholars from around the country—people like Ed Reischauer, Lucien Pye, Bob Scalapino, Fairbanks from Harvard. Very distinguished political science experts, some historians, some economists. We would bring them together every six months for a three day period. I would produce a selection of reading materials, mostly classified—think pieces, key telegrams, etc. I would put them into a packet, ready for the participants to read when



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they arrived in Washington usually one day before the conference started. We would have policy discussions, chaired by Bill, with these people. That was fascinating. We would have the inputs of these people from all over the US academic world.

*Q: Did the panels take an entirely different view from that of the government, particularly on Vietnam?*

DUEMLING: No. As a matter of fact, what one would see were some people with great reservations about what was happening in Vietnam; others essentially supported the government's Vietnam policy. One thing which the academics agreed upon, after Bill thanked them effusively for coming and taking time out of their busy schedules, was that it was a tremendous opportunity for them. They had an opportunity to learn from the readings and the discussions which they could not obtain in their academic environment, where they were not involved in operational policy problems. They obtained an insight into some of the gritty realities which would not have come to their attention otherwise. For the most part, they were rather diffident in their criticism of the government's policies. They were certainly some reservations expressed about the wisdom of the government's policy and about being dragged deeper and deeper into something from which we were not getting the desired results in the desired time frame.

*Q: Did you have the feeling that things were being left undone in the other parts of East Asia outside of Vietnam? Or that we were being driven into doing things because of Vietnam which might have been counter-productive?*

DUEMLING: First of all, I thought that an awful lot of the Vietnam policy was "wish-think". I thought that in listening to some of the presentations—I used to have this discussion with my friend and college classmate George Carver, who was in CIA in an extremely responsible position both on the operational and intelligence sides—they were much rosier and optimistic than they should have been. I thought that there were an awful lot of people putting the best construction on the data. In terms of Vietnam crowding out

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legitimate concerns from other parts of the region, there is no question that this was the case. I can't give any specific example, but I felt that sometimes our relationships with the Japanese got somewhat skewed—we weren't paying enough attention to how the Japanese economy was evolving through this period. We leaned pretty hard on some of our allies—for example Johnson's efforts with Harold Holt of Australia. That was distorting our relationships with some of the Southeast Asia countries, which had their own agendas and concerns—economic development. To see these resources being siphoned off into the military activities in Southeast Asia, specifically Vietnam, one had to ask how constructive this policy really was. In terms of paying attention, I think that Bill Bundy never lost sight of what was happening elsewhere in the region. He couldn't perhaps give it as much time as he might have wished, but Bundy was extremely able and intellectually superior and could keep an awful lot of balls in the air, even though, he was preoccupied with Vietnam.

*Q: Was there a change when Marshall Green came in?*

DUEMLING: Yes, there was, because Green's arrival coincided with the Nixon Administration's and Kissinger's advent. This Administration decided to go for a negotiated settlement. The whole policy changed and Green was part of that. I am not sure to what extent Marshall was one of the architects of the policy. I think he was. He was extensively consulted by Henry Kissinger who was essentially the architect of the policy. You recall all the negotiations with the Vietnamese in Paris. So there was a change. Marshall, also, as Vietnam began to spin down a little, was able to devote a little more attention to other sides of what was happening in Asia. I might interject here that on the subject of Japan—I mentioned earlier that I became fascinated with Japan in the 1950s when I was in the Navy. While in the Secretariat, I was involved in pulling papers together with Secretary Christian Herter before he went off to a Cabinet level meeting in Tokyo—we had an agreement with the Japanese that we would have periodic Cabinet level meetings which would usually involve the Secretary of State and at least one more Cabinet officer in discussions which would alternate between Japan and the US. I remember preparing the

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position papers, one of which had to do with what was then called “dollar liberalization”. That had to do with the exchange rate between the yen and the dollar and its impact on trade and trade balances. Even then, in the late '50s, we were trying to get the Japanese to allow the yen-dollar exchange rate to ease up somewhat because we recognized that even then the yen was being kept artificially low. The exchange rate was 360 yen to a dollar. We thought that it should slowly go down, raising the value of yen vis-a-vis the dollar. The Japanese continued to stand us off on that because they kept claiming that it was much too soon, that they were still rebuilding, etc. In effect, we allowed the Japanese to have a clear trade advantage with us. That was conscious on our part, but we were beginning to worry about the longer range implications of that arrangement. I can recall to my astonishment and chagrin that periodically—for example when I got back to Japanese affairs when I was posted to Tokyo starting in 1970—when position papers were being written on “dollar liberalization” for meetings with Japanese officials they had virtually not changed. We were still trying to persuade the Japanese to allow the yen to gain in value in relationship to the dollar. We still had not persuaded the Japanese to do that. A lot of people, myself included, had the feeling that the artificially low value of the yen was leading us into some very serious economic trading problems with the Japanese. This is of course a story which is now familiar to everybody. It went on for so very, very long. When the dam finally broke, the yen appreciated very rapidly in a relatively short period of time. In the meantime, it permitted the Japanese to export into the US market at essentially a subsidized price by their own government because of the low value of the yen. It put us in a terrible bind in terms of trade imbalances which then got bigger and bigger. That situation is somewhat akin to being a naval officer, who is “driving the boat”, trying to turn the ship. You find out if you steering a big ship, that it takes a long time between turning the wheel and the effect on the course of the ship. The exact same thing is true when it comes to adjusting exchange rates. Nothing happens overnight. It takes some years to redress the imbalances.

*Q: In 1970, you went back to Japan.*

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DUEMLING: Right. I decided that I could go back to Japan and still maintain my objectivity. By this time, of course, I was too old to become a Japanese language officer, but I insisted on learning some Japanese. I was assigned to a position that was not “language-designated”—that is it did not require a Japanese speaker. I was supposed to go to Tokyo in the Summer of 1970, but the incumbent of the job decided he wanted to extend for one more year. So the job did not open up in the summer. But it was the period of the Exposition in Osaka. I was given the liaison job between the American Consul General in Osaka and the American Pavilion. That was again a staff job. That occupied me from April to November 1970. That was a lot of fun and very interesting. It got me back to Japan and I started learning Japanese with a wonderful Japanese who was on the staff of Consulate General in Osaka. Because the job in Tokyo would not open until summer of 1971, I went to Japanese language school when my assignment in Osaka was ended. I had to persuade the system to let me go to the language school in Yokohama. I found myself a tiny little Japanese-style house in Kamakura, where the big Daibutsu is. I spent seven months in intensive Japanese language training which got me at least a certain amount of speaking ability. I didn't learn to read and write, but I did learn conversational Japanese so I could get around, at least. Then in the summer of 1971, I went to Tokyo where I headed the political-external section. The Political section in Tokyo was divided in two parts: one part focuses on domestic politics and the other on foreign affairs—Japanese foreign policy all around the world. We have a very close relationship with the Japanese so that my job was essentially one of liaison with their Foreign Ministry. I had an assistant and we covered all of the foreign policy areas in which Japan and the United States each took a strong interest, which was most of the world. It certainly included Asia, Europe, the Soviet Union and China; less so Latin America and Africa. We were constantly consulting the people in the Foreign Ministry to find out what the Japanese were thinking about in terms of their own foreign policy positions vis-a-vis these countries and then reporting back to Washington. One of most active things I did when I first took the job was to become involved in preparations for the fall session of the UN General Assembly which in 1971 was addressing the issue of which government would represent China. There was

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a huge battle in the UN on this issue-Taiwan vs. Peking. The US policy was to retain the Nationalist Government in the Security Council seat. We worked extremely hard to line up our allies and muster support to hold the line in support of the Nationalist Government. In the meanwhile, as we subsequently found out, Henry Kissinger was dealing privately with the government in Peking and in fact, a couple of days before the final show-down at the UN, it was revealed that Kissinger was in Peking. He was there on the day the vote took place at the UN. The vote went against us by at least ten or more votes. I had been deeply involved, meeting daily with the Japanese Foreign Office, because we coordinated very closely and they were lobbying around the world, particularly in Asia, in support of the Nationalist Government as were we. Of course, Henry Kissinger just pulled the rug out from under this effort. That was the Nixon "shokku".

*Q: How did this go over with your contacts in the Japanese Foreign Ministry?*

DUEMLING: The Japanese are very polite. I was embarrassed. I was flabbergasted. I was chagrined. The Japanese, very politely and very directly, said to me that Henry Kissinger had a double game going on. They didn't blame me because they recognized that I had been totally uninformed about the US government's two track approach. They said that my government had used me and had expected me to be as effective as possible to carry out one track of this policy. They kind of shrugged, but I did lose some credibility. But as Henry Kissinger has been quoted on more than one occasion: "Who cares if some civil servant is embarrassed?" He could care less. It is of course some kind of experience—deeply unpleasant for a career diplomat because one's reliability and credibility is the major stock in trade. The manual on this subject by Harold Nicholson, the great British diplomatist, made it clear that above all else, Ambassadors and diplomats at all levels have to be reliable and have to be recognized for their integrity and credibility. When you have an experience like the one I just described it is detrimental to say the least to one's image of integrity and credibility. Fortunately, the Japanese realized that I was as much the victim of the situation as they were.

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*Q: There was some of the same impact on the Foreign Service as a whole. After that event, it did not have quite the same faith in the President and the Secretary of State as before. Would their future directives be real or once again, intentionally misdirected?*

DUEMLING: You may be right in pin-pointing that event as a changing force in attitudes. There have been some very significant attitudinal changes within the Foreign Service certainly in the course of the thirty years I served in it. The trust in the leadership is one of them. Can one be sure that the policy being given to you by the leadership is really the one that they will follow? One must ask oneself : “Is this sensible ? Should I lend myself to it?”. Perhaps in some cases, there should be some holding back. That's unfortunate. Of course, there are other things that effected that. For one, the politicalization of the Foreign Service. Increasingly, the Foreign Service officer's view is that if he is to get promoted, he has to play politics—both within and outside the Foreign Service. He has to find a mentor, a protector, a rabbi in the White House or in the NSC or somewhere who is going to advance his cause. Increasingly, people see that assignments to highly desirable positions are administered not within the Department, but dictated from outside. That means you have to have your friends outside the Department.

*Q: Were there any other periods during your career, besides the China events you have just described, during which there was a conflict between Japanese and American policy directions?*

DUEMLING: During my time in Japan, there were some tensions over Japanese policy toward Iran. They were heavily dependant on Iranian oil at that time. They had to be very careful about how they treated the government of Iran. They were much less enamored with the Shah than we were. They were much more cautious about what might happen in Iran. The Japanese may have seen the coming demise of the Shah before we did. They positioned themselves to be a little less involved with the Shah. They may have been able to build some bridges to other Arab states. That was equally true with respect to Israel. The Japanese have never been strong supporters of Israel. In part that was because we

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are talking “real-politik” here. They are interested in the energy resources of the Middle East and therefore they have always been very anxious to maintain very good relations with Arab countries. They don't want to compromise those good relations by getting too cozy with the Israelis.

*Q: You left Tokyo in 1974.*

DUEMLING: That's correct. I was supposed to go to the Senior Seminar, but in the meantime, Bob Ingersoll, who had been our Ambassador in Tokyo and whom I had served there—we had become and remain very good friends and I thought he was a super guy—had been the Assistant Secretary for the Far East since his Tokyo assignment for a brief period and then became Henry Kissinger's Deputy Secretary. At that time, he sent me a message asking that I return to help him run his office as his Executive Assistant. I turned him down because I felt that I had been assigned to too many staff positions and I thought that the assignment to the Senior Seminar would position me for a good subsequent assignment after the year. I told the Deputy Secretary that I was very flattered but that I couldn't accept his offer. The telegraphic response to my position was that Ingersoll had talked to the Director General, who had said that all other things being equal, if I would work for the Deputy Secretary, I could go to the Senior Seminar the following year. On that basis, I agreed and returned to Washington to work for Bob Ingersoll. As always happens, once you get into a job, you find there is a lot going on. Bob had a lot of responsibilities as Deputy to Kissinger and I found myself deeply engaged in running his office—sitting in all of the important meetings, being his note-taker on some of the most sensitive meetings, participating on the Ambassadorial assignments committee, which is always an interesting matter, etc. I actually stayed for two years. I didn't see how I could have left after one year. As it turned out, Bob decided that he would leave after two years, so that both of our departures took place at essentially the same time. As I was nearing the one and three-quarters mark, I began looking around for another assignment because I had decided at this point that it would not necessarily serve my interests to go to the Senior Seminar. I decided to look for something a little more operational. At that moment, Tom Enders, who



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had been an old friend since our undergraduate days at Yale and with whom I remained friendly during our Foreign Service years, had been assigned to Canada as Ambassador. He asked me whether I would join him as his Deputy.

*Q: Just to return to Ingersoll for a minute. What was your impression of the Ambassadorial selection process during the Nixon-Kissinger years?*

DUEMLING: The usual pattern in this process was that a new administration had a long list of supporters who had to be taken care of. So that the pressure comes at the beginning. It is a kind of balloon at the beginning of a new administration. By the time I went to work for Ingersoll—1974-76— it was the end of the Nixon administration and the beginning of the Ford administration. By that time, most if not all of the demanding supporters had been taken care of. There was less pressure therefore by that time than there would have been at the beginning of the administration. Even so, the White House continued to have its nominees and people they wanted to appoint. The process in those days would call for the White House personnel office to send over to the Department—Bob Ingersoll—resumes to be looked over. He would be asked to interview some of these people. In some cases, you had the sense that the White House knew that a particular aspirant had very little going for him. One of the ways that the White House used to get these people off their backs was to send their resumes over to State with a request that the Deputy Secretary interview them. At least that gave the impression that the candidates were getting some attention. I would sit in on those interviews and would do the draft assessments on these political supporters. I gave them to Bob Ingersoll in draft and he would edit them. He agreed 99% of the time with my findings and would sign off on them without changes—occasionally he would add a sentence or two. These reports would be sent to the White House. More often than not, these assessments would indicate that the candidate did not have the qualifications necessary for a position in the Department. That would largely take care of the matter. Sometimes, there were some attractive people who were obviously people of substance. Ingersoll would then send back a note indicating that the Department would be willing to try to find an assignment for the candidate, if that

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was what the White House wished. Then the Under Secretary for Management, who was responsible for appointments, would be asked to look at individual bureaus to see when there might be a suitable opening. There was always a concern for quality and experience and qualifications.

*Q: What was your impression of the operational style and effectiveness of Henry Kissinger?*

DUEMLING: We discussed that question in part during my description of the US two track policy toward China. We mentioned the problem of the Foreign Service's credibility in this kind of a situation. There was an attitude in the Department of some caution and concern about Henry Kissinger. There was also at the time a great deal of resentment at the way Henry Kissinger was running US foreign policy at the White House through the NSC. Most people found Secretary Rogers to be a pretty weak sister compared to Henry Kissinger. When Bill Rogers resigned and Kissinger became Secretary of State, there was a great deal of enthusiasm among career Foreign Service officers, thinking that at least then the action would have moved over to State. The Department then would be close to the beating heart of American foreign policy and much more involved. To some extent, that did come true. Certainly, the beating heart had moved to the Department. The extent to which Foreign Service officers were or were not drawn more into the picture would be hard to assess. I think the answer is that they were probably drawn more. As for Kissinger himself, he is a brilliant man, he has an extraordinary ability to think conceptually and globally, to formulate and enunciate policy. He was enormously active and able and successful in projecting the "mystique" of Henry Kissinger. When one considers the major players and personalities in American politics, particularly foreign policy, there are very few names that come to mind as people who dominated the stage as Henry Kissinger did. Or John Foster Dulles in his time. Everyone was somewhat in awe of Henry Kissinger and as far as I could determine, Henry went to great pains to make sure that everyone stayed in awe of Henry Kissinger. I saw relatively little of him. Bob Ingersoll saw more of him because Bob would attend his staff meetings. Bob had tremendous respect for Henry

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and the way Bob played his job, was to do whatever Henry wanted him to do. He felt that he was Henry's deputy in the full sense of the word and that meant that whatever Henry wanted to "deputize" him to do, he would do. Bob did take a great deal of interest in the internal workings of the Department and the Foreign Service, which Henry Kissinger could care less about. Henry was interested in the assignments of top personnel, but he wasn't really interested in the workings of the Service as a Service or the health of the Service as Service or the internal workings of the State Department. But Bob Ingersoll was and was therefore perhaps the perfect complement to Kissinger. Ingersoll brought a sense of management, stemming from his very successful corporate executive experience—he had been the CEO at Borg-Warner. He knew the American business community. Henry Kissinger leaned very heavily on Ingersoll for his knowledge of the American business community because Henry was very anxious that American business would support Henry and his policies. He saw Bob Ingersoll as a very effective spokesman to the top levels of American business because Bob belonged to those circles. Bob was happy to perform that function and did it very well. Ingersoll was quite interested in the financial aspects of the Department and how it managed its budget. He was appalled to find out that we didn't have certain kinds of documents to keep track of things in certain ways. He made some major changes in the internal fiscal administration of the Department of State. For one thing, he tried very hard to get an Office of the Comptroller established, in which he didn't quite succeed because Eagleburger, who after being Henry's assistant, became Under Secretary for Management and opposed the idea. He saw it somehow impinging upon his area of responsibility. It would have been under his control in any case, but he didn't like the idea. Shortly thereafter, however, the Office was created and remains an important office to this day. There is even today a monthly report which is called the "Ingersoll" report which has something to do with how much money we have left in the till. So Bob instituted some major improvements in the management of the Department. He was also the first Deputy Secretary of the Department virtually in memory who took an interest in the Inspection Corps and in its reports. He used to read those inspection reports and would talk to the Inspector General and the Director General about some of the problems of the

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Service. He took an interest in a lot of things that Kissinger did not. My sense of Kissinger was for the areas that he singled out to be of primary importance and to which he devoted himself, he handled with considerable skill and panache. Few ever liked Henry, but that may be besides the point. The question might be whether his style offended people and therefore compromised policy objectives. I doubt that it did that in any significant way. Henry was able to maneuver and manipulate successfully. When Henry wanted to turn on the charm, Henry could turn it on. He was a very skillful practitioner.

*Q: When you arrived in Canada in 1976, what were the major problems facing the Embassy?*

DUEMLING: When I went there, Tom Enders expected me to perform the classic functions of a Deputy—I would run the inside of the Embassy and Consulate General structure. I was essentially the quality control officer and when Tom had any reservations, questions or complaints about the performance on any of the Embassy sections, he would come to me to express his concerns. I therefore devoted a lot of time to being the principal quality control officer and that needed a lot of attention. We had a weak Political Section and I spent a considerable time working with them trying to help it, training and organizing. I was also the principal over-seer of the six Consulate Generals that we had. I visited them and wrote the efficiency ratings of the Principal Officers. I had a big management job. In addition to that, I was drawn into a number of substantive issues such as fishing on the high seas—specifically in the George's Bank in the East and two places in Alaska in the West. These problems had to do with fishing boundaries for salmon and cod, etc. Another major issue related to energy and revolved around whether Canada would permit the export to the United States of its natural gas and petroleum in sizeable quantities. One of the key questions was on the need for a pipeline and while I was there, Tom and others negotiated the agreement for construction of a pipeline from Alaska through Canada into the US. We had another low-key but tricky key issue. It was referred to in Canada as the "Orlikow" affair. It had to do with a very unpleasant situation which started in the early '60s when a brilliant psychiatrist—Dr. Cameron—working in Montreal on problems of mental

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illness became a pioneer in “psychic driving” which involved medicating ill people in order to condition their thinking. The CIA was very interested in this experiment. Through one of its assets, it funneled some research funds to Cameron. Several years later, Cameron, was killed while mountain climbing. Subsequently, some of his patients, who were being subjected to radical treatments, became dissatisfied with that experience and decided that they had been abused. In the late '60s, during the great fuss about the CIA putting secret funds into different research operations, it was discovered that CIA had been funding Doctor Cameron's research. In fact, it only funded something like 3 percent of it. There was a huge political out-cry in Canada. “The long arm of the CIA was destroying Canadian citizens for its own pernicious research interests”. This became a hot issue and the husband of one of Doctor Cameron's patients, who was a member of Parliament, would raise the issue during the “Question Period” in Parliament. Then the Foreign Office—External Relations—had to come up with an answer for the Minister. That meant that they had to get in touch with the Embassy. I became the principal conduit for the dialogue between the two Governments on how to handle this whole situation. The CIA felt that they were getting a bum rap because Dr. Cameron had started his experiments long before CIA funding came into play. Secondly, CIA put a very small amount into it and therefore they felt that if there was to be any litigation, it should first involve Dr. Cameron's clinic in Montreal and then the hospital of which the clinic was part. The CIA felt that if there were to be any criticism it should be directed to the clinic and the hospital and not to the CIA. This was essentially a political football. The M.P.—Orlikow—was a left-winger and some believed it was all an attempt to embarrass the Government of Canada and the US government and the CIA. These kinds of issues can take an enormous amount of time to sort through. Then there were some trade issues, having to do with the auto pact and transportation—trucking—into the United States. There were also some low key defense issues, but they were not contentious because Canada remains one of our very closest allies in the defense sector. We do a lot of things together and there is an exchange of officers serving in the other country's military. I was partly involved in these issues, monitoring them, visiting defense establishments in Canada and the US Basically

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speaking, our relationship with Canada is a very stable one and while I was in Ottawa, we did not have anything as politically sensitive as the “Free Trade Agreement” that has just been concluded and which has dominated Canadian politics for the last two years. But we did have a political issue when I was there which was an internal Canadian issue. I refer to Quebec separatism. That came to a head while I was there. Rene Levesque won a provincial vote and formed the Government of Quebec Province. His party was committed to seceding, thus creating a good deal of domestic political turbulence, which was something that we had to follow very carefully because Washington was very interested in the outcome. Essentially, US policy was “hands-off”. We were not going to become involved; it was an internal matter for the Canadians, but when pressed we did say that we thought that anything which in any way diminished Canadian geographic integrity as a nation, was not in our interests. There were other perceptions on this issue. I was interviewed very extensively recently by a French-Canadian journalist who is writing a book about this period. He was probing me very carefully on the subject of whether the United States had not seen that if Quebec had split off from Canada and had become independent, that the United States could have dealt much more easily with two weaker powers than with united Canada, which would have been a stronger power and could have more easily resisted US policies. I told him that this issue had arisen during policy discussions, but was quickly dismissed as having far more negatives than positives. He found that very hard to believe. He obviously belongs to a school of politics which prefers to believe in conspiratorial theses.

*Q: Of course, our objective was much more practical and stressed the desire to have a strong central government.*

DUEMLING: That is self-evident to us, but obviously if you are a Quebec nationalist, you would prefer to think that the US would support you because the situation could be seen in other terms.

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*Q: A number of people have thought that the US doesn't pay enough attention to Canada. Did the Canadians really want the US to pay attention?*

DUEMLING: That is a question that arises all the time. When you first arrive in Canada, you are greeted by this point. Canadians will immediately tell you that the US doesn't pay enough attention to them. In a certain sense, that is true. We don't pay enough attention to them for a variety of reasons. In the first place, we have much graver problems in other parts of the world. Secondly, we are very happy with the existing relationships with Canada. We admire the Canadians, we think they are doing a fine job running their own country and we don't see why we should have to devote a lot of time to worrying about that. Thirdly, there is a real question whether the Canadians would want us to pay a lot of attention because with that comes a lot of running around in Canada taking a deep interest in some matters which may be the last thing that they really want. That is usually a good riposte to anyone who complains about not giving Canada enough attention. On the other hand, it is true and probably immutable, we as a country exert such a powerful cultural image that the rest of the world has to come to grips with us. In the case of Canada, it is particularly compelling since we are right on their door step with 90% of their population living within 100 miles of the border. Most Canadians have relatives in the United States, visit frequently, those who can afford it spend the winters in Florida. There are large Canadian enclaves in Florida and Maine. They feel a little overwhelmed by the image we project and they feel compromised. That's why they complain and that is also why they have taken steps to protect their cultural and social identity. Some of the stickiest issues in US-Canadian relations have to do with film distribution, television broadcasting—where signals emanate from, what kind of advertising, who advertises because what they hate, for example, is the fact that people on the Canadian side from Buffalo love watching the Buffalo TV station inducing the smart Canadian advertiser to place his advertisements on the Buffalo TV waves. The Canadians finally passed a law making it very expensive for a Canadian entrepreneur to advertise on the Buffalo TV station. Needless to say, we got into an argument about that because we considered their action as a restraint of trade. On the



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general question whether we pay enough attention to the Canadians, we will never pay as much as they would like. On the other hand, happily, we will never pay so much attention that they wouldn't like it. When I was faced with these questions, I would usually treat them with good humor and I would try to offer a semi-humorous response and try to change their frame of mind.

*Q: Your next assignment, after the friendly Canadian experience, was of a different caliber. You were assigned to the Sinai which was territory between the Israeli and the Egyptians.*

DUEMLING: That is right. After four years as DCM in Ottawa, I rather belatedly went to the Senior Seminar which was a terrific experience that I enjoyed greatly. The year I graduated was a bad time in the Department's history as far as its personnel situation was concerned. Not a single one of my State Department colleagues in the Senior Seminar—not one—had an onward assignment when we graduated from the Seminar. We were told that we were on our own and that we could roam the corridors to see whether we could find a job. It was an appalling situation. I went looking around and happened upon the fact that there was a new organization being started called the “Multinational Force and Observers”. It was the successor organization to the observer teams we had in the Sinai earlier. But this new organization had to be created to implement the Camp David Accords. There had to be a combination of civilian and military observer force. The State Department took the responsibility for getting in touch with other governments to see whether they would participate in this endeavor. Initially we had hoped for a UN peace-keeping force, but the Russians were going to veto that in the Security Council. So the US had to sponsor the effort. This was the first and perhaps the only multinational force organized outside of UN auspices, except Vietnam. The Department went around and signed up about eleven different countries, who agreed in principle. Then the US as the lead country had to design this force—there was not really any prototype for it. It was decided that what was needed were somewhere between 4,000 and 6,000 troops which included a helicopter component. Under the Camp David accords, the Sinai was divided into three zones. The Israeli were going to withdraw and the Egyptians would move in

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behind them incrementally, eventually taking over the entire Sinai, which is the situation at the present. There were various levels of armaments permitted and other agreements that required daily verification by both military and civilians to maintain the integrity of the Camp David accords. We had to set up this observer force. The commitments were made by about eleven countries; then we had to go to these countries and fill in the blanks on the table of organization. At the time, the countries had only committed in principle, not to any specific mode or type of contribution. When I joined this organization, it was still in the process of trying to design itself. It was deciding what the table of organization would be, what units would be involved, the nature and size of these units, and what the civilian role would be. The US was going to provide all the civilians and a full battalion of troops and a lot of logistic support, but we were looking to the other participants for two more battalions, trucks and drivers and mechanics to support the transportation fleet, helicopters and pilots and mechanics, a headquarters company, a signal company, etc. There had been no agreements that anybody would do anything specific. I was assigned to this organization to be a negotiator to go to governments as we determined which we thought could fill the various responsibilities. I would go as part of a team to persuade governments to give us what we needed as opposed to what they might have in surplus and would be willing to give us. In that capacity, I worked initially with Frank Maestroni and a couple of others, but eventually I ended up leading the teams myself. In addition, even if a country had agreed to give us what we needed, we had then to negotiate the terms and conditions and the remuneration, the timing, the logistics, etc. I worked with the Colombians in Bogota to work out their commitments for a battalion of troops. I visited Montevideo to work out the terms and conditions of the trucking unit from the Uruguayans. I visited London and The Hague to discuss with the Dutch the assignment of a signals company and with the British, the headquarters company. That was tricky, because we initially had intended that the signals company be British because that is a hard requirement to fill. This company needed highly skilled radio technicians, who are in short supply in any country's military forces. You need radio technicians who are communicators trained to the NATO standards, using English and the NATO signal-books. That narrows the field. The British refused to provide such

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a company because they didn't have the man-power. The only country left was Holland. I was despatched as a "one man Mission Impossible" to go to The Hague to try to persuade the Dutch military that they should provide this company. I met with the commanding general of the Dutch army, who was very nice, very polite. I laid out our problem and the reasons for having the Dutch—namely, that they were virtually the only force that could do it. He listened to me and then said that I was asking for the impossible. He said that the Dutch had barely enough of those skills in their own army as it was. He pointed out that the Dutch had a draft Army, which had very short periods of service—only six months. Communicators had to spend another six months or more. By the time the Dutch finished the training, they only had three months left in their service. He pointed out that I had asked for six months assignments. He concluded that the request was just impossible because the soldiers would have to re-enlist for another three months to fulfill my request. He thought that was hopeless and no one would do that. I asked him to do me a favor and to publicize the opportunity to serve in the Sinai. If anybody wanted to volunteer, they would have to re-enlist for another three months to complete a six months' tour in the Sinai. He agreed to that for us, but didn't give it much of a chance. When he did announce the program, there were 1,000 volunteers. These young people wanted a little adventure. All we needed was sixty, so the Dutch were able to fill our request. I take my hat off to the negotiators of the Camp David accords. They made that whole thing work. You never hear about peace-keeping problems in the Sinai because that whole operation is in place, very effectively administered and we never had any problems with it. It continues to this day and you never read about it.

*Q: Your next assignment was as Ambassador to Suriname from 1982 to 1984. How did that come about?*

DUEMLING: By this time, my old friend and colleague from Ottawa, Tom Enders, had become Assistant Secretary for Latin America. As my time for re-assignment came up—the Multi-national Force assignment was just a short-term one for 8-9 months—Tom decided that I would be a very good person to put into this rather peculiar job in

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Suriname. I say “peculiar” because this country is under the Latin American Bureau, is in South America, but is Dutch speaking. It is therefore not part and parcel of the Latin American package. It is sui generis. He asked me if I would go and I agreed. It gave me an opportunity to have an Embassy of my own. While the appointment procedure was in progress, I took intensive Dutch because I didn't know any. I learned enough Dutch and I continued to study the language with a tutor during my assignment. I got to the stage where I had passable conversation skills and I could read documents. All of the local newspapers are in Dutch, government documents are in Dutch and the television and radio are in Dutch. So it was important that one should speak the language. There is bit of irony in this because by derivation, I am half Dutch. My mother's family were pure Dutch although they had been in the US for over 100 years in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

*Q: Holland, Michigan, is very close by. What was the situation in Suriname when you got there in 1982?*

DUEMLING: It was a very tense situation because there had been a peculiar military coup that had taken place in 1980. The Dutch gave Suriname its independence in 1975. The Dutch left it in perfect shape. It had everything going for it. For a small Third World country it had paved roads, it had an excellent and extensive electrical network which did not break down—no shortages or outages—, it had a superb water and sewer system—better water than in Washington, DC—, they had a trained labor force, an excellent school system, no endemic diseases. The country had everything going for it. There was some dissatisfaction among the military and the enlisted men decided they wanted a trade union. That may sound funny to us, but the Dutch army has a trade union. So the Surinamese army decided it had to have one. They petitioned for one and the government turned them down. Then about thirteen sergeants decided to go on a sit down strike. These sergeants sat down in front of the President's Palace. At a certain moment, they were invited in to talk to the President who told them that if they thought they could a better job, they were welcome to it and he walked out, leaving them in charge of the country. There were a few shots fired—very few. The government tried to use the police to get the sergeants back

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to the barracks, but they refused. There were two people killed. It finally turned out into a military coup. The sergeants were self-proclaimed Marxists of a sort—of the kind that is very vague about Marxism, certainly not intellectual Marxism. It was mostly dissatisfaction with the general situation. So the military took over the government. Initially, it was a friendly operation. There were a lot of people in the traditional establishment who were trying to be more or less supportive of the new government. But things deteriorated rather quickly because the military, in trying to run the government, didn't have the skills or the education to do it. Government services began to fall apart and the economy began to fall apart. People began to mumble about having lived in a democracy with a Parliament and began to demand the return of democracy and representative government. There was increasing agitation on the part of the civilian population, including demonstrations, demanding the resignation of the military government and the return of a democratic form of government. It became clear that the military was in increasing danger of losing control of the country. About this time, the dictator by the name of Bouterse—the lead sergeant, now Lieutenant Colonel—invited Maurice Bishop, the head of the government of Grenada, whom he considered to be his mentor and model, to come for a State visit. Bishop came even though the visit was very unpopular because most Surinamers didn't like Bishop and didn't like what he was doing in Grenada. He was not given a warm welcome by the people; on the contrary, on the last day of the visit, the government tried unwisely to organize a public meeting, which was met by a demonstration which outnumbered the government's meeting by about ten to one. Among the people who were deeply involved in the demonstration was the leader of the Trade Unions as well as others. We subsequently learned through documents that Maurice Bishop had a long conversation with Bouterse and told him that if he didn't get tough with the opposition, he would lose control of the situation. He had to smash the opposition. Bouterse thought about that for about one month and then in early December 1982 took his palace guard out in an evening and picked up about 18 people, some of whom had been the ring-leaders of the opposition. Fifteen people were tortured and then murdered. These included some of the most prominent citizens of Suriname. That occurred about four months after my arrival.

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That put a wholly different complexion on what was going on in Suriname. It absolutely chilled the population. Initially there was a twenty-four hour curfew. That was eased finally to a twelve hour curfew which continued for about six months. Needless to say, the US reaction was extremely negative. I was sent in to tell the Prime Minister, who was a figure head, and occasionally the dictator, our views. Part of the problem was that we had had a modest assistance program—the Dutch had a very large one—and when the Dutch suspended theirs, we did the same. That put the country in a very serious bind. The Surinamese always wanted to talk to me about the possibility of resuming the program.

*Q: Under the circumstances, why did the US appoint an Ambassador?*

DUEMLING: I was appointed before the slaughter. I went out at a time when our relationship with Suriname was low-key, not terribly friendly because we could not be supportive of a military government, particularly a left-wing one. We wanted to continue the relationship because we were concerned about the strategic location of Suriname. If it had a hostile government, it could interdict the supply routes to and from the Panama Canal. Any traffic heading for the Canal from the South Atlantic goes right past Suriname. The problem of a hostile government became even more difficult after the slaughter because the government then moved radically to the left. A new Cuban Ambassador arrived and the government took on a very Cuban tinge. The Cubans were essentially calling the shots. I had been assigned before this had happened to this degree. Then the question was whether I should stay.

*Q: What policy were you recommending?*

DUEMLING: In the first place, I reported in as much detail as I could what had happened. It was extremely difficult to get any information concerning what precisely was going on. I had a CIA office there and we just contacted those we knew somewhat surreptitiously because of the curfew. We were doing the best we could just to tell Washington what had occurred which was not immediately apparent. It took a better part of a week to figure out

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really what had gone on. The reaction from Washington was that I should remain. They wanted to have someone in place to report on events. They thought it would be better to have someone do that than to close the mission. This was a small Embassy and if the Ambassador were pulled, it would not have worked very well. We had a DCM who had been charge' for a long time before I arrived. He knew the country very well—in some ways, too well. In this turbulent period that followed the December massacre, the dictator called me in during January to declare the DCM and the head of USIS personae-non-grata. They accused both of them of meddling in internal politics. I denied it of course because from an objective point of view, neither officer had been “meddling”. They had certainly been hustling around asking people what was going on trying to keep track of events. Unfortunately, both had done a couple of silly things that I did not know about until somewhat later. One thing for example that the dictator told me was that the government had tapped telephones and had recorded efforts by the DCM to call, before the slaughter, the labor leader I mentioned earlier to ask him what he intended to do about supporting the demonstrations. The government had all of that on tape and they decided that this was provocation on our part. They declared these two officers, who knew a good deal of what was going on, personae-non-grata thereby reducing the staff considerably. Washington decided that it made sense to keep me in Suriname, since these other senior officers were no longer available as fall back.

*Q: Did you agree with that assessment?*

DUEMLING: I saw no reason for me to return because in the first place my assessment was that the local actions were not directed against us, but rather were an internal situation. We might have had a reaction, but it was not directed against us. In the second place, I didn't feel in any great personal danger nor did I think my staff was. I didn't have a Marine contingent to guard the Embassy. Before I went to Suriname, I was asked by Enders whether I wanted a detachment. I said “No, it is a small post and I don't see a need



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for them.” Often in a setting like that, the Marines can often be more trouble than they are worth.

*Q: This is often true. Young men who get drunk, chase the local girls and in time of trouble, can't really shoot. They really don't help that much.*

DUEMLING: I didn't see it as a necessity. Once we got through the slaughter and the problems, it would have been difficult to get the Marines in because at that point the government also was watching us very carefully. I thought that the answer to the situation was to sit tight and continue a dialogue with the government. We had a quiet dialogue and tried to find ways to establish some rapport with the government to find out what they were doing. We did make some small gestures, very small—I got CINCSOUTH and the CIA to come up with some money to buy a couple of electronic score boards to install in a big gymnasium that they had. The Surinamers were going to host an international basketball tournament and needed the boards. There is an international association of military sports. Our military forces belong to it as well as twenty other countries. This association gets together and has a basketball tournament. For some reason, Suriname was hosting and the US military were coming to play in that tournament. I supported that effort as being fairly innocuous. We wanted to maintain friendly relations with the people of Suriname who were very pro-American. We didn't want to desert them. We were working towards an evolution which would result in the return of a democratic government, which is what is happening now—slowly. The point was not to “lose our cool” but to hang, in taking some modest steps, but always telling them that they would not receive any further assistance until they had cleaned up their act and returned to some form of democratic government. As a policy matter, I didn't think therefore that any purpose would be served by pulling up stakes.

*Q: Was there any opposition to this policy in Washington?*

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DUEMLING: Quite the opposite. The opposition to the policy, of which I learned shortly thereafter, came from those who were considering the invasion of Suriname. The Grenada invasion was on October 25, 1983. Earlier, in late January, 1983 - only six weeks after the slaughter - my wife had traveled back to the U.S. - she did that about one week per month because she is a very busy person with lots of commitments - and had to be hospitalized for an emergency operation. She was in the hospital for a week. I called Enders to tell him that I had to come to Washington to be with my wife to help her through her convalescence period for at least a week. He told me that he thought he could not get permission for me to leave Suriname at that point in time. I told him that it was critical and had to be done. He said he would check and see what he could do. He called twenty-four hours later and said that although it had been very sticky, he had gotten the Secretary's approval for a week's return to Washington. It was not until I returned that I realized what was going on. At the highest level of the U.S. government people were talking about invading Suriname. This was about eight months before we actually invaded Grenada.

*Q: You might say that the gun was loaded and ready to be fired.*

DUEMLING: That's right. It was part of "Let's roll back Communism or let's not allow further inroads" By this time, after the slaughter, with Bishop riding high in Grenada and the Cubans increasing their influence in Suriname, the situation in that part of the world was looking very unpleasant to the Reagan administration. That is why there was a good deal of thought being given to moving in and turning it around. But nothing much happened. I used to come to Washington about once every three months and I would call on Judge Clark, who was then the National Security Advisor, to tell him how things were going in Suriname. This was very unusual that an Ambassador from a tiny country like that would see the NSC advisor. He wanted to see me and every three months I would report to him. He would push across the desk copies of telegrams and messages that had R.R. written in the upper corner. Ronald Reagan was following on a daily basis what was happening in Suriname.

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*Q: What were you and the CIA reporting on the situation? What was your level of concern?*

DUEMLING: We were telling it exactly the way it was - that is to say, reporting exactly what these people were doing, the clear left-ward drift of the government, the increasing Cuban influence on the government. There were certain contingency plans were being made. Washington was wondering whether it would be necessary to evacuate the Embassy. We were developing evacuation plans. I think in the Summer of 1983, during one of my visits to Washington, I was told in advance that the Joint Chiefs wanted to talk to me. I was invited to address the Joint Chiefs and went to their secure area in the Pentagon. Every member of the joint Chiefs, with the exception of one who was represented by his Deputy, sat around the big open square table with a number of subordinates around the wall - there were sixty people in the room. I was in the middle of one side of the table. The Joint Chiefs sat opposite me across the open hollow square. The Chairman thanked me for coming and asked me to open the discussion on whether the U.S. should invade Suriname. We discussed that for an hour and fifteen minutes. They asked me to describe the situation. I sketched for them my understanding and assessment of what was happening, what the country was all about, what its relative importance in the scheme of things was, what degree of threat it posed for a wide variety of American interests. I concluded by saying that the defenses of the country were extremely modest, that although not a military man, my own assessment was that a strike force of approximately 200 paratroopers should be sufficient to take complete control of the capital city and the two military compounds. I did not see it as a major military problem to take over the country if that were the decision. However, I added, that I thought it would be very misguided to take over the country, easy and tempting as that might be. In large part, I did not feel the threat was sufficient to justify the expenditures, the military risks, to say nothing of the down-side political situation in terms of the OAS and our image elsewhere in Central and South America. Those were judgments to be made in Washington on an inter-agency basis. It was not a judgment for the U.S. Ambassador in Suriname. The final and probably most telling point I made was that I

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had been aware of the contingency plans for sometime - we had had Delta Teams (the special high grade strike forces of the U.S. military that comprise surface, air and water components) surreptitiously introduced into the country to make assessments and take pictures and gather intelligence. I knew about this because I had them in the Embassy, ostensibly to assist us with some contingency plans. I therefore was aware of all the military contingency plans that had been made, but I noted that no discussion had taken place about what would be done after the country had been occupied. On the assumption that on D-Day plus three, we had fully occupied Suriname. The population would be 85-90% entirely friendly and all opposition would be supine at that stage. But who will run the country? They have not been able to run it for themselves for some time. My assessment was that it would have been a very difficult task to run the country. It was very fractured culturally, ethnically and economically. It was a nightmare of a little country from the government's point of view as its recent political history demonstrated. All that would happen would be that Uncle Sam would pick up the can of worms. I didn't think we wanted to pick up that can. They listened to that very attentively and thanked me for confirming certain judgments that they had already made. That was the last that was ever heard of invading Suriname.

Having excluded invasions, there were still theoretically ways by which we could work internally against what was taking place. For example, Bouterse had decided that he wanted to come to the U.S. to attend and address the General Assembly. He would have done that in October of 1983. As a routine matter, the Surinamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs got in touch with the Embassy requesting visas for the dictator and his entourage. They sent the passports under cover of a diplomatic note. We made checks on all of these applicants - some we knew, others we had just heard of. We found that among the principal bodyguards, according to the CIA files, was a Cuban with military and security training who had been detailed by the Cuban government to run the personal security detail of the dictator. He was posing as a Surinamer, which is not hard to do because Suriname is an ethnic mixture. There are a number of Hispanics. The bodyguard had a

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fictitious passport. The photograph was of the right guy, but the name, birth date and place of birth were fictitious. We were able to zero in on this fraud and to identify who he was. We dutifully visaed the passports and I signed off on the returning diplomatic note. I hand carried the package to the Foreign Minister with whom I had established a good personal relationship. I had always made an effort to maintain correct and in some cases, cordial, relations with the members of the government on a personal basis. I did that even with the dictator because I used to meet with him periodically usually at my request. We always treated each other with great courtesy and politeness. That worked out very well. I think it is the right way to do these kinds of things.

So I had a very good personal relationship with the Foreign Minister. When I called on him, we chatted I and handed over the passports. I asked him how much he knew about the chief bodyguard. I noted that this particular gentleman was operating under a false identification; we knew it was false and we knew who he really was. I told him that normally we would not have put a visa on a fraudulent document, but as a courtesy to the dictator, I was taking personal responsibility for doing so. The Foreign Minister was much taken aback and thanked me. I told him that this episode had me wondering a little bit about how delicate the situation was getting with all this Cuban influence. There was some question in my mind on who the Cubans were supporting - there were already some divisions taking place among the military dictatorship. There were certain people that the Cubans favored and there were lots of rumors to the effect that the Cubans would have liked to push out Bouterse and replace him with someone more congenial to the Cuban point of view. I told the Foreign Minister that I sensed certain problems within the government on the subject of Cuban influence and support. I was little puzzled why the dictator wanted to have a Cuban in charge of his security in light of these rumors. The Foreign Minister looked at me wide-eyed - these are fairly naive people - and said that this was an interesting thought that he had not considered. That conversation proved ultimately - we found that out through intelligence sources later - to have been a very important seed to plant. The conversation was duly reported to the dictator, who was paranoid in any

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case, and he began to worry. He did not take the Cuban to New York and may in fact not have gone himself, I don't remember. As October wore on, the problem of Cuban influence became increasingly difficult and I was constantly playing on this with anybody I could get to. It was clear that the Cuban Ambassador was overplaying his hand. The dictator was getting more and more nervous. He was losing control to the Cuban Ambassador and those supported by the Cubans.

In an extraordinary confluence of events, on a Friday in late October we got wind of the fact that Bouterse was going to throw out the Cuban Ambassador and those who had come with him. He was going to close the Cuban Embassy for meddling in internal affairs. He was supposed to make this speech on Saturday night, but he was still working out some problems in the speech. We didn't know what they were, but he didn't make the speech or the announcement until Tuesday morning. It just happened that on the previous day, the U.S. had invaded Grenada. The dictator nevertheless went ahead with his speech. Of course, everyone in Suriname thought that the two events were related. Bouterse, not surprisingly, was mad as hell because he had no inkling of the U.S. action in Grenada and neither did I. We totally took the play away from him by sheer coincidence. A lot of people thought that it had been a quid-pro-quo with one of the spin-offs of our invasion of Grenada being the expulsion of the Cubans from Suriname. That was not of course the case since Bouterse had already made the decision before the invasion. He of course might have been prompted to do so if he had not already made the decision, but the sequence of events clearly indicates that his decision preceded the invasion of Grenada. The sequence of events made him look like he had cut and run which made him very mad, but in any case, he went through with it, he did toss out the Cubans and thereafter he decided that the country had to be returned to some degree of democratic government. From that point on, the Cuban influence was eliminated and he began talking again with various elements in the Suriname body politic about ways of creating an advisory council initially, and ultimately an assembly. That's the path they have followed and today there is more popular influence - not yet democratic, but they

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have had elections, and have a consultative assembly with some powers. It is a more democratic state than before. It is moving in the right direction, but too slowly. The Dutch have resumed their assistance. I left Suriname in about August, 1984 and by that time, the situation had stabilized.

I invited Bouterse to come to our July 4 celebration which in Suriname is very small - the diplomatic corps and members of the government. The American community has its separate party. He came and brought his senior military and government people. People were quite surprised because he never represented the government at national day receptions. Our reception was held at mid-day. People would have the usual toast to the government and the two national anthems - your own and the Suriname ones, usually by recorded music I got two girls, an American and a Canadian, who had beautiful voices, who sang both national anthems - ours and the Surinamese sung in Sranan which is the lesser official language. This reduced Bouterse to tears. He was very impressed that anyone would have taken the trouble to do this and particularly that it was sung in Sranan. He was a very strong nationalist and the very fact that we did it in Sranan live, doubly impressed him. He shook my hand very warmly. It was this kind of thing that I tried to do to maintain a relationship even when our policy differences were very clear and when we discussed them openly. That does not preclude some human touches to try to keep a relationship going somehow. I think it is important particularly when the great majority of Surinamese are very friendly to us and we want to keep it that way. We don't want to alienate the people of Suriname; we don't want them to think that we don't care about them because we do. When I left the country a month later, to my astonishment, at a little formal reception and dinner that was given to me by the President, he proceeded to give me the highest decoration the government of Suriname can give to a foreigner. This medal was of a grade never before given to a diplomat. The President explained to me privately that he and his government well understood that the relationship between the countries had had very tense moments in the last few years and there had been some difficult problems. But he felt that I, as an Ambassador, had managed those problems as



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well as anyone could have and that therefore the government wanted to acknowledge that fact.

*Q: You mentioned earlier the “strategic importance of Suriname.” In looking back over your career, was Suriname really of such strategic importance? Had not the importance of its geographic location been overtaken by modern technologies?*

DUEMLING: The fact of the matter is that the Pentagon, in my view, is always excessively concerned by the security dimension of real estate. That is a primary concern for them and I don't fault them for that. The question is one of degree. If you choose a little country like Suriname on the North-east shoulder of South America, you have to ask yourself the level of importance of such a piece of real estate, even granting that there is some. It was of considerable interest in World War II because the U.S. Army built a large airfield in Suriname which is still there and functions as the international airport of Paramaribo. During World War II, it was one of the stepping stones for the route across the mid-Atlantic over to Dakar. It was of great importance then.

Today, it is of much less importance. Given the range of aircraft and this being the age of missiles, it does not have the same importance. It has some limited interest with respect to the sea-lane approaches to the Panama Canal from the South-east, but that is about it. I would conclude that it has no great strategic importance today.

*Q: With reference to the Suriname case specifically, would you please discuss your relationship with the CIA?*

DUEMLING: During the course of my career in the State Department I always felt that I had excellent relationships with my colleagues in the Central Intelligence Agency. I found them for the most part highly knowledgeable professionals, interesting and dependable. I always felt that as a Foreign Service Officer, working for the entire U.S. government, it was imperative that we work as closely with the Agency as we did with other Federal agencies.

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There was an interesting episode while I was the Ambassador to Suriname which had to do with the attitude of my own station chief - the raking CIA officer on my staff - in terms of his attitude towards the State Department. This episode arose during a tense moment of internal Suriname politics. I mentioned earlier that while I was in Suriname, the country was under the control of a military dictator, Bouterse. He had been a sergeant and he together with other sergeants, led a coup in 1980 and had taken over the country. Only two people were killed in an episode that lasted about two or three days before they had secured power. Not surprisingly there had been a certain amount of rivalry among the military who were running the country. There was a certain amount of social and political turbulence in the country generated by the fact that Suriname had been a democracy and there were a number of people agitating for a return to that state. It was a politically unstable situation.

Bouterse had as a principal deputy a man by the name of Roy Horb. Horb became increasingly disaffected from Bouterse and the strong arm tactics that he employed, particularly when the dictator, under the influence of Bishop, the head of Grenada, decided to arrest about sixteen of the most prominent citizens of the country, who were his political opponents or agitators in support of democracy. He had them arrested in the middle of the night of December 8, 1982. He tortured them for twenty-four hours and killed them. That very brutal episode apparently alienated Horb, who felt that this kind of violent suppression of criticism of the government was uncalled for and was wrong. Within the ruling military circle, Horb was arguing against such tactics and behavior and for greater accommodation with the political opposition. Horb had been approached by the CIA and much that we knew about the situation we knew from the CIA. He was a contact, a resource, of the CIA - a rather valued one given the fact that he was in the inner circles. In January, 1983 a letter was slipped through the Embassy's mail slot one morning, addressed to me. It was brought to me about 9-9:30 in the morning. It purported to be from Horb who claimed that he was being held prisoner against his will by Bouterse at a military base not too far from Paramaribo. The letter made a great number of accusations against Bouterse and

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said that Horb was entirely opposed to this. He opposed the Bouterse dictatorship and feared for his own life - he did not think he would survive, but he wanted it known that he was in opposition. I immediately summoned the country team, including the station chief to discuss the letter. We spent an hour and a half analyzing this letter. We came to the conclusion from other evidence that we had that this letter was a provocation - that it was not a legitimate document. For one thing, it was Xerox copy, pasted together with Horb's name apparently forged onto the document. I prepared a very long analysis of the document, based on the country team discussions. I was about to dispatch this analysis with the text to Washington in about mid-afternoon when I got a phone call from the Department, followed by a "Flash" telegram, asking me what was going on with a document from Horb. Washington wanted to know what was going on as soon as possible. I was surprised that Washington already knew, because I thought it was understood within the country team that we were preparing a collective analysis. What in fact had occurred was that the station chief unbeknownst to me and unauthorized, had simply sent the text of the letter to his own Agency through his communications channel without informing me. That immediately aroused State and Defense Departments and the NSC. Everybody got very excited and wondering what was happening. I thought that the station chief's action was disloyal because we were trying to analyze the document and put it into some perspective. I dispatched this long analysis which was the proper way of handling this sort of event since there was no great urgency about it. The point was to provide Washington with the text of the letter and some points of reference for analytical purposes and a recommended course of action. This should have been submitted as a package. You don't send the document and say that the matter is under consideration and that analysis follows. Sending the document alone only gets people excited unnecessarily. Washington was very interested in our analysis and agreed with it and our recommendations - namely that it was a provocation and that we would stay alert to see what would develop next.

Within a couple of days, I received a telephone call one morning about 9 o'clock from the Foreign Ministry saying that Bouterse wanted to see me right away. I was told that I would

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be received in the old office of the Prime Minister at about 10 o'clock. I arrived promptly and was ushered into the old Cabinet room. Waiting for me were three people: Bouterse, Horb and the Foreign Minister, a strong leftist with ties to Cuba and no particular friend of the United States. I was asked to sit down and if I wanted to have coffee. I accepted that. Bouterse then took a document and reached across putting it in front of me, asking me whether I had ever seen it before. It was a copy of the letter that had come through the mail slot. I admitted that I had seen it before. Major Horb was looking extremely agitated and very nervous. Bouterse and the Foreign Minister appeared quite calm. The dictator then asked me what I thought about it. I expressed my view that it was a forgery and a provocation and I gave them some of the more obvious reasons for my conclusions - I did not give them all of our rationale. Horb was vastly relieved and turned to Bouterse and told him that he agreed that it was a forgery and that he had had nothing to do with it. I told the dictator that I thought the letter was a clear provocation and I assumed that it had been concocted by people who were against good relationships between the U.S. and Suriname and were trying to upset that relationship. I told Bouterse that I dismissed the whole incident. He thanked me and said that he would like to call a meeting of the diplomatic corps, which he wanted me to attend, for noon. By this time, it was 10:30 or 10:45 in the morning. I returned immediately to the Embassy and went to the station chief's office. I told him exactly what had happened and expressed my puzzlement by these events. I asked him whether he had any idea how Bouterse had gotten a hold of the letter. He said that he didn't have any idea. We speculated a little bit on how events may have transpired and how the letter may have fallen into Bouterse's or Horb's hands. The station chief expressed total ignorance and total bewilderment and gave me no advice on the meeting of the diplomatic corps.

At 12:00 o'clock, I returned for the meeting of the assembled diplomatic corps. Bouterse, Horb and the Foreign Minister were all there. Bouterse proceeded to hand out copies of the document to everyone present; then went on to say that he had called the meeting because everyone knew that the political situation in the country was very fragile and that

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there was a lot of rumor mongering and provocations going on. He said he wanted to commend the Ambassador of the United States, who had received such a provocation, for coming forward and giving this letter to the government. He noted that had been precisely the right thing to do and hoped than anyone else who might be given such a document would be equally forthcoming. I said nothing. As the meeting ended and we were walking out, I turned to my French colleague and told him confidentially that we had never given the letter to the Suriname government. I added that I had no idea where the document came from, but that I would not be surprised if it had originated with the government.

I went back to the Embassy and the station chief's office. I reported what had occurred and I proceeded to send a telegram - a fuller one than the brief one I sent after the morning meeting - to Washington. About 2:30 in the afternoon, the station chief came in to see me and said that he had given that letter to Horb days previously. That was obviously the way Horb knew about it and could have been, although not necessarily, how Bouterse found out about it. I noted that during our morning meeting, he had denied knowing anything about events. He said that he had told me that under instructions from his Washington headquarters which had told the station chief that I was not to be told about the letter having been given to Horb or that he had been in touch with Horb. I was to be kept in the dark. I told him that I had just been walking through a mine-field without knowledge of the facts. I had, on the spur of the moment, to decide what to say to Bouterse when he confronted me with the document. I told the station chief that I thought the whole situation was entirely unacceptable. I had been totally blind-sided. I further added that fortunately, I had enough wit to handle this thing properly, no thanks to him, the station chief or the Agency. I told him that I would contact Washington immediately.

So I sent a telegram to the Assistant Secretary, Tom Enders, explaining what had occurred, that I had not been properly informed and that the decision not to tell me had been approved by the Department of State. That last piece of information came from the station chief. I requested that Enders tell me, by return telegram, if the Department had agreed with the Agency that I was not to be informed. I further added that if the information

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were correct, he would have my immediate resignation. I got a return telegram within a couple of hours, saying that the information I had was totally incorrect, that the Department had never been told anything about the letter, it had never approved the idea of keeping the Ambassador in the dark. I gave the station chief Enders' reply. He said he didn't know what to say. In the meantime, another message was received from the Agency, saying that it had never approved the idea of keeping me in the dark. The station chief then alleged that it had been an oral arrangement, done over secure phone and that he had been told that I was to be kept in the dark. Obviously, someone was lying. Was it the station chief or his superior in Washington? Or was it the State Department? Not clear. It was perfectly obvious that this episode gave me grounds for firing the station chief and I could have sent him packing within a week's time because he had clearly violated the most fundamental relationship of loyalty and honesty that must prevail between an Ambassador and his staff. I did not fire the station chief because he was, on balance, an able officer. I had a very small staff. I relied on the station chief as much as I relied on anybody within the entire Embassy in terms of support and pursuit of U.S. policy in the country. Quite frankly, I would have divested myself of a very important asset if I had sent him packing, which I could have done.

I cite this episode because it underscores a number of problems. First of all, of course, is the importance of loyalty and confidence. Secondly, it points to the reality of situations when you are abroad in a small Embassy, in a difficult political setting, trying to conduct a relationship in pursuit of U.S. interests. It sometimes becomes a luxury to stand on principle as I could have. I was in a similar, although less serious, bind with respect to my Defense Attache, who wasn't very smart and did some silly things - not dangerous like what the station chief had done, but silly. I complained about this to the Commanding General of the Defense Attache Corps when I called on him in Washington. He asked me what I thought of the Defense Attache; so I told him that I didn't think he was very good and gave some examples of how I reached that conclusion. He said that he would pull him right out. I asked how long it would take to replace him. The General said "Eighteen

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months.” That ended that conversation. We had a number of ticklish things going on in Suriname and I had to depend on that Defense Attache to take care of the SWAT team types who were coming in, reconnoitering the country. I had to have the Attache in place to backstop these special teams. I could not afford the luxury of getting rid of a guy and taking a vacancy. These are the realities of what an Ambassador in a small post is faced with. It is not like being in Bonn where you can fire somebody because there are fifteen people standing behind the guy with the senior ready to take over.

*Q: You mentioned two matters on which I would like your comments. You used the phrase “Country Team.” I’d like your views on that concept. The other issue concerns the timing and phrasing of telegrams to Washington.*

DUEMLING: On the first point concerning the “Country Team,” I believe in the concept of a circle of senior advisors, each with his or her area of responsibility - the Deputy Chief of mission, the Political Counselor, the Economic Counselor, the CIA station chief, the Defense Attache, the chief of the Consular Section, the Public Affairs Officer and others. For an episode of the sort I described, I thought it was immediately imperative to involve the senior Embassy officers and solicit their perspective on the situation to have them come with some ideas of what was taking place and what we might do about it. That is the whole point of having the country team. I felt that involving them was important not only to get the benefit of their advice but also to inform them about what was clearly a major development in our situation in the country. As I described earlier, the station chief went off on his own and without informing me, sent that initial telegram with the text of the letter.

That had precisely the wrong effect, which brings us to the second point that you raised. You should never send Washington a raw message about a developing situation, without providing some degree of commentary about it. It may be extremely brief and if it is complicated, you may just want to say “Our initial reactions are... and a more detailed analysis will follow within the next twelve to twenty-four hours.” Clearly this episode demonstrated the undesirability of a raw, shoot-from-the hip message because it gets



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everybody needlessly excited. They start jumping to conclusions which are usually ill founded. In this case, Washington was wondering whether there was some kind of provocation that could be quite serious, involving some move against the American Embassy or against its staff. Ail of that was possible. But as I pointed out to Bouterse, the forgery was rather ham-handed and it wasn't that difficult to detect the signs of it being a forgery. There are other forged documents that are much more sophisticated and therefore much more difficult to detect.

*Q: One other point about the telegram to Washington that should be mentioned is that some times a wrong message leaks almost immediately into the news media with horrendous effects.*

DUEMLING: That is correct. As an epilogue to the story, I mention that shortly after the "letter episode," Bouterse imprisoned Horb in a small jail in downtown Paramaribo, next to the Fort which was the military headquarters. Within one month, Horb was dead allegedly a suicide - hanging by the string of his athletic shorts. Nobody accepted that explanation. It seemed pretty clear that he had been strangled to death - not suicide, but murder just like the other fifteen that Bouterse had ordered sometime earlier. I might add that CIA had handled that particular asset very poorly and his demise was in large measure because the Agency had been stupid and had done something with and for Horb that even Bouterse was smart enough to see had to have come from someone on the U.S. side. Horb had been given a special trip to the United States, he had been presented a couple of small ponies - he loved animals - which arrived by commercial charter. Horb didn't have that kind of money; someone with an awful lot of money was being very kind to Mr. Horb. If you live in a small country like Suriname, you can figure out quickly who has the money for things like that. That was stupid.

*Q: Lets' go to your next assignment.*

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DUEMLING: I left Suriname in 1984 and returned to Washington to do a management study. The then Under Secretary for Management, Ron Spiers, asked me to make a study of the relationships between CIA and the Department. I don't think this was related to my recent experiences with that Agency, but a coincidence. What had occurred was that in a routine inspection of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), the Inspector General had commented that there appeared to be some things that were not entirely right in the relationships abroad between the two agencies. The IG was concerned about the use of "cover" abroad. I can't get into detail on this issue because it is classified, but in effect I spent from September 1984 to June-July 1985 working on this project which was a joint project with the CIA. I always had good relations with my CIA colleagues which stood me in good stead when I undertook this project because my reputation in CIA was that I was a reasonable fellow who could work with the CIA without any hang-ups—which cannot be said of all Foreign Service officers. This was a very interesting project. The Agency was very cooperative and thought so highly of the final report, which included 36 recommendations, that it had it printed as an internal document and made it required reading for all their station and deputy station chiefs. I was flattered that they thought of it as well as they did. From that assignment, I went to the Inspection Corps as a Senior Inspector. That assignment lasted for less than twenty-four hours because in the course of the Summer, I had been approached by Jim Michel, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for ARA to see whether I would be willing to take on the administration of an appropriation of \$ 27 million for humanitarian aid to the Nicaraguan resistance movement—the Contras. I had declined to take that job on the grounds that I didn't think I was qualified for it. It seemed to me that a more appropriate person would have been someone with Central American experience, including command of Spanish, and with experience in administering aid, which I had not had. So I declined. I was asked once again by Mike Armacost, then the Under Secretary for Political Affairs—an old friend. Mike called me in to ask me to do it and I gave him the same reasons why I did not wish to do it. I then went to Airlie House for a meeting of senior Inspectors of whom I was supposed to become one. The IG went over the agenda for the coming year and the new Inspectors were

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briefed on the process. While I was out there, I got a phone call about mid-day from Armacost who repeated his views that I should take the assistance job because I was just the right man for it. He said he understood my reservations, but thought that I had other qualifications which would make me eminently suited for it. He mentioned that the Secretary also thought that I was the right man. I responded by saying that if the Secretary personally asked that I take the assignment, I could not refuse. He said he would call back and within five minutes he did in fact call back saying that I had an appointment with the Secretary at 6 o'clock that evening. I returned to Washington and walked into the Secretary's office at 6 o'clock. George Shultz showed his sense of humor when he greeted me by saying :” Bob, I understand you have agreed to take the job”. I said “Yes” and asked him what he expected. He gave me three major points: the guidelines contained in the legislation on how the funds were to be spent—he emphasized that I was to adhere to those guidelines and not to test the limits of the law; he wanted the program administered efficiently and with enthusiasm; thirdly, he wanted the maximum amount possible of the assistance given to the intended recipients and the minimum amount spent on administration. The reason he made the third point is because the newspapers carried a few weeks earlier a story about a big fund-raising dinner in the private sector for aid to the Contras. The story reported that the gross receipts from the dinner were approximately \$ 250,000 of which less than \$25,000—more in the neighborhood of \$ 6,000—had gone to the Contras. The rest went to consultant fees—two guys got \$50,000 each—, dinner costs—food, drink, the hall—etc. The people who went to the dinner forked out a lot of money, very little of which actually went to the cause. I took on the job which was very interesting because Congress had appropriated \$ 27 million, but had also stipulated that neither Defense nor CIA could have anything to do with administration of the funds. Congress was at that time very unhappy with both Agencies on how they administered other Contra programs. There had been considerable discussion among the various Executive branch agencies after the passage of the legislation and Presidential approval in early August 1985 on which agency might be able to administer this program. AID refused to do so because they felt it would tarnish their image to be associated

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with something that was so politically charged. George Shultz did not want it in State Department because State was not an operating agency for administering assistance. It went around and around until it was decided that the only solution was to establish a new semi-autonomous agency which would be under the political guidance of the Department. That is what was done and I was given a Presidential appointment which did not require Senatorial confirmation. It was up to me to create this new little agency. In light of Shultz' admonition to spend as little as possible on administration, the obvious way to proceed was to select people with appropriate experience and background who were already on the federal payroll who could be seconded to me without reimbursement to their agencies. This proposal was warmly received and that is what we did. My deputy was from USIA—he had long experience in Central America and particularly in Honduras. I finally got a commitment, after much haggling, out of AID to give me three officers who had experience in administering assistance programs. Then I got some people out of State Department. I put together a small staff of under ten people. Besides myself, there were two State secretaries, a political officer from the Department, there were three AID officers and one from USIA. We set up shop in rather austere offices in a building in Rosslyn. There was no precedent for administering aid like this. We were doing something totally new. It was ill-advised but we had no choice because of the constraints placed upon us by the Congress in the legislation. My first task was to talk to people who had experience in assistance management looking for potential prototypes. I found the closest parallels to what we were trying to do was in AID's Emergency Relief Office and with the Department's Refugee Relief program, which were used to fast actions. We had to take rapid action because the Contras by that time had not had any US official assistance for over a year and were in dire need of aid. We had to crank up very fast. The White House and the NSC and George Shultz were very anxious that the program move ahead as fast as possible. I was on a spot because speed in getting the program underway was one objective; the other was that the program was to be administered in a way that accountability would be preserved. I had to create processes that would channel these funds in an efficient manner with the records kept appropriately, making sure that the channels were viable and were reliable.

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*Q: There was considerable scrutiny and criticism at the time?*

DUEMLING: There was indeed. This had been fiercely contested legislation and it had some bitter opponents. Therefore, even after it had passed into law, there were many members of Congress who would have preferred to derail the whole program by putting road-blocks in front of the process for implementing the law. I felt very unhappy about all of that because I believed that since it was the law of the land, it was not appropriate for members of Congress—and there were a couple of Representatives I can think of—to harass the proceeding. Mike Barnes of Maryland was the principal opponent. He was the chairman of the Latin American subcommittee of House Foreign Affairs Committee. Barnes had been opposed to the legislation and even after it was passed he held hearings. Within a couple of months of passage, we had an anonymous letter sent to the Inspector General alleging financial irregularities in my operations and accusing us of malfeasance. The IG immediately called me and told me he had the letter. I asked him to send his inspectors over right away so that we could be watched every minute. I was operating this program in clear daylight and wanted anyone who had any questions to watch. I had also gone to the Intelligence Committees and asked for their auditors to advise me on what procedures I should use to implement the law. They declined to participate on the grounds that it would probably be unconstitutional for the Legislative Branch to be telling the Executive how to conduct its business. That I think was a bit of a cop-out, but I understood. The next thing that happened, Barnes asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to get in the act and the FBI also got into the act. Within three months of establishing this program, I had in my office representatives of the Department's IG, of the GAO and of the FBI. Everything was open to them. They saw everything. They were there for months and months.

*Q: Did they help in setting up the system?*

DUEMLING: No, they wouldn't play that game. That would have been nice. I would have appreciated their advice. At the end of the program, no one was able to come up with

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any significant assertion of malfeasance. There were a couple of episodes where there were funds that were misused, but it was our organization that discovered those, with the help of the CIA and we brought them to the attention of GAO. The GAO in turn reported these to the Congress, as they are obliged to do. The senior GAO official most closely involved with our program was a Ms. McCabe. She was excellent, highly professional, entirely realistic. The only difference that I have had with the GAO was on questions of theory. GAO maintained that the accountability checks were inadequate for it to be able to certify with certainty that the aid was reaching the intended recipients. My response was that I agreed, that I understood the point, but that I was operating under constraints, not of my own choosing, namely that this was an overt program in the US, but we were in effect delivering covert aid in Central America. This fact forced the aid to go through Honduras, which did not wish to be seen cooperating with our effort to aid the Contras, because that was not helpful to their own bilateral relationships with Nicaragua. They wanted to be able to disavow any assistance, although the aid delivery was being assisted by the Honduran military. This is now all in the public domain even though it was no secret even then. It was this game of deniability that everyone was playing. Another problem that arose concerned the location of my staff. I had expected to put them in Honduras both at the airport and in the forward areas along the border where the supplies were being delivered to the Contras. However, I was not permitted to have my staff in Honduras. I was told the government of Honduras did not want us there, but I have very good reasons to believe that it was the US Ambassador-John Ferch—in the fall of 1985 who was the real block. He was very much opposed to our program as was his DCM, Shep Lowman. They were personally opposed to the program, so much so that a few weeks later, Elliott Abrams, the then Assistant Secretary for Latin America, had to telephone Ferch to tell him if he didn't support US policy toward Honduras, he would have to be recalled. At that point, Ferch decided he would join the team. But until then, he opposed our program because he felt it would be inimicable to US relationships with Honduras. Of course, I was trying to carry out a policy fully approved by State Department and Elliott Abrams, to whom I looked for political guidance. I was trying to get the program off the ground, while being watched

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by all the different agencies. When it was all over, there were only two cases involving about \$ 75,000—which we reclaimed in large part from the Contras in cash because we felt that the expenditures were not in accord with the legislation. Overall, then, the loss to Uncle Sam was in the \$ 5,000-\$10,000 range, which was very small. People have told me, after it was all over, that they have never seen an aid program administered as efficiently as this was. We had spent slightly over 1% of the principal for administrative expenses. The normal percentage runs between 10% and 25%. We were considerably under the average. That was in response to George Shultz' admonition to get the maximum flow through to the intended recipients. We not only administered the program to the best of our abilities under the constraints imposed on us, but I am confident that that aid in fact did reach the intended recipients. We tried in every way possible to check that, including audit of our in-country suppliers. We procured items in the United States—boots, ponchos, web belts, raingear and pharmaceuticals—and shipped them by air into Central America. Within Central America, we procured food and other daily necessities—paper products, fuel oil, some vehicles (Jeeps), boats, etc. One of the ways we were able to check whether any material was being sold in the black market—that is people accepting the material and then selling it in the black market for cash to buy weapons which would have been misuse of the funds—was to monitor the market places in the small towns where deliveries were being made. We were able to determine that our material never entered the black market.

*Q: If you couldn't have people in the field, how did you conduct the checks?*

DUEMLING: We checked through the CIA, which had a sizeable operation in Honduras, including a separate base that worked entirely on the Contra issue. CIA had its agents in the field, right on the border. Under the legislation and with the full understanding and agreement of the two intelligence oversight committees of the Congress, CIA was able to provide surveillance and report back to us. We got a steady stream of reports, eye witness accounts, on the delivery of the supplies from the airfields in Honduras or El Salvador through the truck supply system to the actual deliveries to the Contras. CIA people were reporting all along the line at various points in the delivery system. That is not to say that



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we had 100% coverage of the deliveries; we did not. But we had a significant percentage and there were spot checks all along. We were pretty confident that the reports were reliable. I want to make another observation. I was running a program of \$ 27 million, which in the federal budget, is a very small program. Compare that with aid to Israel or Egypt. We were talking about peanuts. People with experience in the aid business will tell you that there is a certain amount of "spoilage or corruption" that is to be expected. I think that in retrospect we looked very good. The other irony is that with all the scrutiny focused on us, there were far worse abuses taking place in the Federal Government, such as in HUD, Savings and Loans, etc. There you see malfeasance of dimensions that absolutely dwarfed our program. Yet for political reasons everyone was fixated on our program, thanks to the political opponents. One of the things that motivated Mike Barnes was his desire to grandstand and grab headlines because he was going to run for the Senate. In the spring of 1986, he was trying to build up his public image by making a lot of headlines. I think that was part of his motivation. In fact, he lost in the Democratic primary to Barbara Mikulski and has passed into some degree of obscurity, at least for the moment. I have to say that as a hard working civil servant, trying to discharge my responsibilities under the law of the land, I took a very dim view of Congressmen trying to derail what I was doing by putting obstacles in front of me. A lot of it was pure harassment. There is another dimension of all of this that is noteworthy; namely, the role of Oliver North. Oliver North, who subsequently achieved a lot of notoriety, was the person to whom I was directed for information about the Contras and the resistance movement in terms of their resources, etc. Elliott Abrams and others in the Department directed me to North, a Marine Lieutenant Colonel on the NSC staff. I was told that he had worked closely with Contras and that I should call on him, which I did. I had known him slightly through a conference that we had both attended when I was Ambassador in Suriname. The conference had taken place in Panama. He is a very engaging person. He told me one evening at the conference his world view. He said he thought that the administration had an extraordinary opportunity to turn Communism back around the world. This could be done in Central America, in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the world. He thought that

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would be a great turning point in history. I listened with some interest. I confess a degree of disbelief; it sounded a trifle apocalyptic. That was my first encounter with Oliver North. A year later, I went to talk to him as head of the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office—that is what my organization was called. I talked to him about the Contras; he gave me a lot of information and some help; he mentioned to me a private citizen whom he knew who had been working with the Contras by the name of Robert Owen. Owen, in fact, called on me in September, 1985 when I was trying to organize the staff for the new office. He came to volunteer his services; that is to say he wanted to be employed. He had spent the summer in Central America, working with a member of the Tom Dooley Foundation assessing the medical problems and needs of the Nicaraguan resistance. They had written a report which he gave me. He said that he knew the Contras, he knew Ollie North, he was a true believer—by that he meant that he was a loyal follower of Ronald Reagan—, he was a strong supporter of the policy and that he was the right guy for me. I had some qualms about involving someone who was so clearly identified with the Contra cause because although I was about to provide aid to the Contras, I saw my operation as an arms-length, objective, government program. It was not meant to be highly partisan, in my view. My second reservation was a very practical one. I only wanted people already on the federal payroll who had security clearances. Owen didn't have that. I explained that to him and told him that I didn't have a place for him. In the course of those first six weeks devoted to creating this new semi-autonomous agency, I was casting around for ideas on how this might be done as well as to identify people who could join my staff. I was discussing all these matters with the inter-agency group which was a standing committee at the Assistant Secretary level, chaired by Assistant Secretary for Latin American affairs, Elliott Abrams. The other representatives on that group were officers from other agencies of equivalent rank, including such people as Oliver North, representing the NSC politico-military section. There was also another fellow representing the NSC political section. There was someone from Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA and a few others. That constituted a kind of steering committee which discussed policy and the implementation of policy in the Latin American area. I

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met with that group perhaps as much as twice a week in the initial stages to discuss with them how I was approaching my task, what decisions I was making and to seek their guidance on how to implement the legislation—what was permissible, what was not permissible in terms of the kind of aid that could be given. The legislation forbade anything having to do with armaments or guns or bullets or armed vehicles, etc. It had to be “humanitarian”—food, clothing and the necessities of daily living, pharmaceuticals, etc. In the initial discussions, I explained how I intended to proceed. Ollie North took a very vigorous role in the discussions of the committee. He was a very engaging character, but I thought he had the temperament of a “naughty altar-boy”. He is very handsome in a boyish way with a little lock of hair that falls engagingly across his forehead. He has a wonderful grin. He has the classic all-American boy looks—trim, erect military bearing, handsome, engaging, personable. He knows all that. He is an actor, he knows how to use his appearance, his voice, his expressions, his eye-brows, his grin. He can bring all of that to play and does it very effectively, as was often shown during his testimony in Congressional hearings. I had reservations about North, going back to that conversation I had with him on the beach of Panama, which I described earlier. Also I felt that I had been put in charge of this program and I believed that I should decide what it would be and how it should be run. So I made certain assertions on how I wanted to do things. North didn't take exception particularly but kept hammering on the urgency. He felt that the material had to be moved rapidly. He thought the Contras were in very tough shape and dying. He always wanted quicker action. I told him that I was as anxious to get started as he was, but that it had to be done in an orderly fashion because I was the one who was accountable and had to answer to the Congress on how the program had been administered. I also was accountable to George Shultz, the GAO, the FBI and the Inspector General. I refused to be precipitous. There was a hell of a lot of heat being put on me to move in a precipitous fashion. Ollie was pressing me very hard to take Rob Owen on my staff. I explained to Ollie why I didn't want him. I felt that Owen was tainted politically, because Owen was publicly identified with the right wing friends of the Contras in the United States. I felt that my program had to be apolitical, particularly if I was going to be able to defend it against

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the attacks from the left. They were already coming from Mike Barnes. I certainly did not want to get into bed right away with the right wing. So I didn't want Rob Owen for these various reasons. My position finally forced a kind of a show-down meeting in mid-October, 1985. It was a Saturday morning in Abrams' office and North had been haranguing me on getting going and on Rob Owen. I had discussed the Owen matter privately with Abrams and with Jim Michel, his principal deputy. They understood my position, which I made very clear in the inter-agency meetings. Finally, Abrams turned to me and suggested that I find a place for Owen. I had become totally isolated with everyone, except me, feeling he should be employed on my staff. They were all backing down in front of North. I had also received a letter signed by all three of the Contras leaders —Calero, Cruz and Robelo—asking me to hire Owen to work with them. I finally agreed, but I said that I would only do so by making a grant to the foundation of which Owen was the titular head. This was a one-man foundation called IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Education). That grant would enable him to devote full time to assisting the Contras and to act as a kind of liaison between the Contras and me. He would work for them and I would specify the areas in which I wanted his assistance. I wanted him to work especially on the medical program because he had been involved in that before. I wanted him to expedite things, but he was not working directly for me and was not on my staff. I also told the group that I was in charge of the program and that it would be managed my way. If they didn't agree with that, I asked them to tell me right then and there because then I would resign. They all backed off because they knew I would resign. That was the moment I drew the line on the sand and made it clear that I would not be pushed on how I would administer the program. Ollie North backed off and said he thought that I was wonderful in the job and that I had his full confidence. From that moment on, I had no more problems with Ollie North. I did of course have Owen, but I was able to fence him off to my satisfaction. He made a number of trips to Central America from which he wrote reports which were reasonably useful. He did some very useful things with respect to the medical program. But he also, unbeknownst to me, was playing a double role, which became subsequently public knowledge when he testified before the Congressional investigative Committees.

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There he confessed that on the side, he was doing exactly what I feared; namely he was working for Ollie North and the Contras and involved himself in the private arms supply pipeline. There was nothing illegal about the arms-to-the-Contras. It was just that my program could not have had anything to do with arms. Although Owen was under contract to me full time, he involved himself in the arms supply effort. He lamely excused himself before the Congressional Committees, when asked about this dual role, by saying that the arms work was done after five o'clock on his own time. The contract had stipulated that he be full time and exclusively a contractor to my organization. He had violated his contract. Then the Committee asked him what I would have thought had I known of this dual role. Owen responded that I would have been very disappointed, which would have been the least. The program continued and the aid got there. There was very little cash; that was primarily used to buy cordobas, the Nicaraguan currency. You could buy the cordobas at a huge discount outside of Nicaragua because they were almost worthless due to the terrible inflation. The only cash that we ever gave to the Contras were these cordobas for use when they went into Nicaragua. Otherwise, everything else we gave was in-kind assistance—food, pharmaceuticals, clothing, boots, ponchos, web belts, canteens, etc. In essence, we had completed the disbursement of the available funds by about July 1986. The legislation required that all the funds be committed in the pipeline by April 1, 1986. We did that. Forward contracts were written and the actual supplies had cleared the pipeline by about August, 1986. By that time, we were over the hump with all the investigations which had come to little. In the meantime, a whole separate matter—the Iran-Contra scandal—was beginning to bubble up. We were going out of business. By August, 1986 most of the aid had been given. I spent the Fall of 1986 writing the final report covering all of our activities. Two of my colleagues wrote parts of it, but it was mostly mine. We outlined in detail all of our procedures, we discussed all of the criticisms received, we appended a full accounting of every nickel, etc. We had lots of invoices to back up our expenditures. That report was about sixty-five pages long. It analyzed the experience in great detail. I wrote it for the benefit of anyone who might find himself in similar circumstances in the future. The report had great utility in part for unforeseen readers. Aid to the Contras lapsed

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in April, 1986. It was cranked up again in Summer or Fall 1987 with a new program. This time it was under the auspices of AID, which is where programs of this kind belong in any case. The first thing the AID people in charge of the new program did was to pull out my report so that they could build on the past without having to reinvent the wheel. There were other problems beyond the ones I have already mentioned. There were difficulties with the procurement practices of Contras. We had inherited a pipeline system which I used to a considerable extent although much of their procurement policy was seat-of-the-pants which we of course couldn't use. There were some suppliers we didn't use because we thought they were undependable. There were some other problematic areas. They had to do with flights because we had to charter aircraft and there were some allegations at one point that some of our flights were involved in drug running. What happened was that we did charter private flights from air charter companies, over which we had no control. We were simply hiring a plane and a crew to fly our stuff from New Orleans to Tegucigalpa, which then completed their obligation to us. Whatever else they did, we had no knowledge of or control over. It therefore might have been entirely possible that some of those private charter organizations could have been involved in drug running, but never to the best of our knowledge, did anything that involved us and they wouldn't have because we were moving goods from the United States to Central America in the opposite direction from the drug flow. When the flights returned to the US they were no longer under our charter. There were also some questions about arms drops and we had consulted with the House and Senate Intelligence Oversight Committees about whether we could be allowed to pay for "mixed" loads. We got some guidelines from those Committees because they recognized that if we were making air-drops in Nicaragua, you couldn't send in more than one flight to a single destination and therefore if arms had to be delivered, could they be put on board a flight that we had paid for? The Intelligence Oversight Committees agreed that some limited amount, without specifying how much—I decided unilaterally on 10%—would be permissible. So there were two flights that actually did drop arms—two other were aborted—but it was less than 10%, so that we stayed within the Congressional guidelines. (The arms were not paid for by us, of course.) There was one episode in

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which there was an unauthorized arms loading on one of our aircraft flying inside Central America from Salvador to Honduras. That was against the rules and when we heard about it, we refused to pay for the charter. That caused a bit of a problem, but we overcame it by disavowing the flight and by refusing to pay the bill. It was paid by the Contras from their own funds. The one other comment I want to make about this experience is that I had the unique experience of creating a new federal agency and disbanding it. It went out of existence when it had fulfilled its mission. That is unusual in the federal government where most new agencies go on forever. I cranked it up and cranked it down. Frankly, I am quite proud of that. A lot of people said to me when I took the job that I was opening a can of worms and couldn't understand why I wanted to participate in the Contras-aid program. I thought it would be very challenging. Moreover, the Secretary of State had asked me to do it and you don't say "No" to the Secretary. As Foreign Service officers, we are to do the bidding of the President and the Secretary. I feel very proud about having done that, under extremely difficult political circumstances. We discharged the Congress' mandate efficiently. That was my last assignment in the Foreign Service and I am very pleased in many ways to have gone out on that note.

*Q: You mentioned Michael Barnes. Did you get fired at by Jesse Helms, the Senator from North Carolina?*

DUEMLING: We never heard much from Jesse Helms. We heard a lot from Congressman Henry Hyde. He was strong proponent of the Contras. I was not involved in the political battles, but Elliott Abrams was and he kept me out of those, quite rightly. I almost never testified on the Hill, although I did testify before the Intelligence Oversight Committees, because they wanted to know how it was coming along and what I was doing. Incidentally, while I was catching flak, Senator Durenberger, who was a co-chair of the Senate Committee, issued a press release in June, 1986 strongly defending me and my program. He in effect said that the flak was totally unfounded and that we were doing a magnificent job for which we should be commended for what we were doing and the harassment should stop. That was greatly appreciated. I never had any problem with the Oversight



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Committees. It is a very different thing to testify in a closed session of the Intelligence Oversight Committees because there the members are entirely professional, serious, rational and business-like. It is when Congressmen meet in open session that you get all the grandstanding and all the politicking and all the mugging for the cameras and all that stuff. So it is a totally different environment inside the Intelligence Committees. I never had any problems with those Committees. The program was very political. The Contras had strong proponents of which I am sure Jesse Helms was one, Henry Hyde was another. There were many others. The Administration and Ronald Reagan and Poindexter were strong proponents of the Contras. After all, the Administration was able to get aid through the Congress on that occasion. There were other occasions when Congress refused to grant assistance to the Contras.

*Q: In Suriname, you were out of the Administration's focus in Central America. So when you were brought in, although you were part of the Latin American Bureau, you were not tainted. What was your impression of the atmospherics, particularly around Elliott Abrams and other personalities?*

DUEMLING: First of all, I admired Elliott Abrams. Not everyone liked Elliott. I think he is very intelligent, very quick, very shrewd. His politics were more partisan than mine—I am a centrist. But I respected his operating abilities. Some people didn't like him because he had a sharp tongue and he sometimes had a nasty air about him—a little bit vicious. That never particularly bothered me, but then he was always very polite to me and even friendly. We got along just fine. Jim Michel, Abrams' principal deputy, for whom I had great regard, had an unparalleled experience with the Congress. He was very good at knowing how to work with the Congress. Michel was a lawyer, having been in the Legal Advisor's Office for many years. He was very quiet, very shrewd, savvy, thoughtful and worked with Congress extremely effectively. They all liked him very much; they like Michel in a ways that some people couldn't stand Elliott Abrams. In terms of others, I had very high regard for Allen Fiers who was the CIA man in charge of the whole Contras operation. Fiers unfortunately came a-cropper later on in the Iran-Contras business. He

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must have testified in close session at some length with the Investigating Committees. He was accused of doing some things that were unknown to his immediate superiors. Fiers was forced into early retirement. I had worked very closely with him because I could not have done my job effectively without the assistance of the CIA for the oversight of the delivery pipeline. Fiers was our principal link on an operational basis with Central America and the Contras. Of course, I was in touch with the Contras in Washington all the time. They had offices both in Washington and in Miami. So I dealt with the Contras directly all the time. I thought Fiers was very professional, very savvy, very operational. There was another fellow who got fired from the Agency for doing things that were unauthorized. He was the chief of the base I was using in Honduras. He once said to me that he was there running the base to help the Contras. He said that he had been in Vietnam, involved in the assistance to the Vietnamese Army. The way we "left our Vietnamese friends behind" made an indelible impression on him. He said he would never, never again be involved with supporting people that we would then turn our backs on. He apparently did some things for the Contras which were unauthorized and perhaps even contrary to official policy. He was therefore sacked. He felt that on the one hand, we were promising to support the Contras while on the other withdrawing aid to them. Of course, he was partially right since our assistance was often on again, off again. He felt that it was unconscionable to draw people in, then welsh on the commitment. I would further say that if I were to fault the administration for any part of its Latin America policies, it would be that they became so preoccupied with Central America that they neglected other important US interests on the South American continent. There was too much preoccupation with Central America to the detriment of other more important issues in Latin America.

*Q: They also drew down a lot of good will by forcing Latin American countries to support our efforts in Central America.*

DUEMLING: That was true. We were using up a lot of good will from the Hondurans, the Costa Ricans and perhaps others. I must however add that I don't think that all Latin American countries covered themselves with glory. For example, the Sandinistas came

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to power through the active assistance of the Costa Ricans and the Colombians and the Venezuelans. Then when the Sandinistas had proven to be fully as tyrannical as the Somozas had been, they refused to assist the democratic forces, including the Contras. I am not saying that all Contras were democrats. The Costa Ricans particularly like to posture as being very correct and very democratic. In fact, they were at times very partisan when it served their own interests. I never had much regard for Adolfo Calero. I thought he was out of the classic Central American caudillo mold. Unfortunately, the Central American countries historically have been ill served by a succession of strong-men—the caudillos. It is very much ingrained in the political tradition of Central America. You could even argue that that is what the Central American people want and expect. Costa Rica is one of the few exceptions to that rule, but elsewhere you have seen a succession of strong men. That is what Colero would have been. He was not much of a democrat. Cruz was much more of a democrat, but was rather weak-willed and rather indecisive. Robelo was smarter, somewhat more of a democrat, but he too comes clearly out of the privileged classes of Nicaragua. He was a little ambivalent in some of his attitudes. After working with the Contras, from the top leadership to the lowest echelons, I have the highest regard for the rank and file. I made two or three trips into Central America to inspect the supply lines, the warehouses and the advance bases. I came to have great regard for some of the people in the medical side—the doctors and the orderlies—who were operating under extremely difficult conditions. These doctors could have made a lot more money elsewhere, but they elected to work for this cause because they believed in democracy in Nicaragua. They were doing a wonderful job. There were a lot of others in the supply side who believed in what they were doing and who were subjected to considerable personal privation and discomfort. I had to admire their willingness to work under those conditions for a cause. I did not have that high regard for the leadership which I thought was in large measure rather self-serving. Some of their immediate assistants were pretty good and some were clearly involved in self-interest. They were living well and enjoying themselves.

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*Q: You came to the Contras issues rather late. Did you feel you were essentially involved in a holding operation for a doomed cause?*

DUEMLING: At the time I went in to it, I did not think it was a doomed cause. First of all, I would not have done it if I did not have at least a general agreement with the policy. I was in general agreement with the Administration's policy of trying to support a democratic resistance to the Sandinistas. I saw the aid program being a factor in pursuit of that policy. I also felt that it was a reasonable proposition. As I got into it deeper, I did feel that the Contras leadership was a weak reed and that the whole operation was weak, if it were to be the primary instrument for the restoration of democracy in Nicaragua. I thought that the Administration was pinning its hopes much too heavily on the Contras as being the instrument for the restoration of democracy. I didn't think the Contras could hack it. The more I saw of them, both in terms of the leadership's venality and the ineffectiveness of their military operations, the less confident I became of the chances of success. In the long term, it was doomed to failure. But I couldn't see or know that until I had been into the operation for six to nine months.

*Q: What about the other Foreign Service Officers? Were they divided into true believers and skeptics on whether the Contras would succeed?*

DUEMLING: Yes, it did divide people. I always had the impression that the Central American Office had very mixed feelings about the humanitarian assistance and the Contras themselves. I felt that Bill Walker, who was Abrams' deputy for Central America, was very ambivalent on the subject. He was very careful to keep a certain distance; he had to be involved, but I noticed that Walker and the Central American Office director and staff, wanted to keep the Contras assistance program at arms-length. They were always nice to me, polite and friendly, but they were careful not to become too involved themselves. They appeared to have reservations about it, intellectually, but they also thought it was pretty high risk politically and they didn't want to get brushed with this program if it might become detrimental to their careers. There seems to be an increasing

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concern for careerism in the Department of State and among Foreign Service Officers. Foreign Service Officers have been pushed into that. There is a certain inclination among some to indulge in careerism. Increasingly, FSOs have been pushed into being careerist—self seeking for personal advancement—because there is less merit promotion at the top, there are fewer jobs at the top because more and more go to political appointees. That makes the competition increasingly tough and vigorous and in some cases, vicious, leading inevitably to careerism at lower levels. So I always felt that there were intellectual reservations, which are legitimate and genuine, but also other factors at work. No one in the Department put up any barriers in my way. They recognized it was the policy and they were going to discharge their responsibilities. I worked with one middle-grade officer in the Central American Office who was always very supportive who saw it as his professional responsibility. But there were people senior to him in the same Office who were much more aloof. The Nicaraguan desk officer never wanted to be involved. So there was a mixed picture.

*Q: Looking back on your multi-faceted career, what gave you your greatest satisfaction?*

DUEMLING: That is hard to answer. We usually find professional challenges in every place we are and therefore in terms of professional achievement, it is possible to have a sense of success in different places and at different times. I would point to my more senior positions toward the end of my career as being ultimately the most satisfying. I am proud of what I was able to do with the Contras assistance program because it was done under such trying and difficult circumstances. That was an important achievement. I also enjoyed being associated with the creation of the Multi-National Force for the Sinai because that has proven to be a very lasting and successful peace-keeping effort. It was again an opportunity to be creative because we had never done anything like that before. Putting together that peace-keeping force outside the auspices of the United Nations without precedent, was on the frontier of experience and creative. It was great fun to go off on the negotiations with other governments at a high level, achieving an objective. In both cases, we are talking about tangibles—something happens that is clearly tangible, that

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you can achieve and measure. Often, as we in the Foreign Service are painfully aware, what you achieve is intangible and therefore difficult to measure and difficult to stimulate a sense of achievement because you can't point to anything. The "tangibleness" of those two assignments was particularly satisfying. However, managing to successfully navigate the political rocks and shoals of two years as Ambassador in Suriname, particularly with that extraordinary episode I described earlier involving my disloyal station chief—that gave me a sense of achievement. When I left, the government to my astonishment conferred upon me the highest order that is available to a foreigner in the highest grade that had ever been given. In Dutch, it is called Ere Ordre van de Palm Trager van de Grosse Lint, or in English, "The Honorable Order of the Palm, Bearer of the Grand Sash". Under the Department's regulations, one has to ask permission to accept such awards and it is done on the basis of "you keep it unless they object". Since they never objected, I have kept it. I wear it to this day. It has a little rosette which goes into your lapel. It has a great star that you hang on your left breast and it has a sash which goes around your neck and down your side, with the medal dangling somewhere on your right left. When I am in white tie, I am in full fig with this sash around my neck and the great star. It always amuses me because I do actually wear a white tie from time to time—usually at the National Gallery of Art when they are putting on a major dinner party with the President in attendance. The Director of the Gallery—Carter Brown—, who happens to be a good friend of mine, who has a number of decorations himself from foreign governments, always says to me as he shakes my hand going through the receiving line:" Bob, I never got one of those that has a lovely sash. I envy you the sash". If you are in to foreign decorations, every one recognizes that a sash denotes a high order of rank within that particular chivalrous order. People always want to know where I got that sash. They are always surprised that it comes from a little country called Suriname. They gave it to me because despite the very tense relationships between the US and Suriname, they and I felt that I was able to conduct the relationship in as professional and friendly a manner as possible given the circumstances. They appreciated that I was always fully professional with them, particularly with the dictator. We had a perfectly friendly relationship. It was never very

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warm, but it was cordial and correct. I did enjoy some of my staff jobs, particularly working for Bob Ingersoll, when he was Deputy Secretary and for Bill Bundy when he was running the Asia Bureau at the time of Vietnam. I feel that at the end of it all, I was very fortunate in the assignments I had. I never had a dull assignment; I never had an assignment I disliked; I was never in a country that I disliked; and I had some assignments, that from a purely personal point of view, leaving aside professional considerations, were delightful. My first assignment abroad, the three years in Rome as a bachelor in the early 1960s, was absolutely wonderful. I had the time of my life. It left me with very warm feeling towards Italy and the Italians. I can't say that my professional achievements in Italy in those years were of particular distinction.

*Q: What would you say to a young person today who is considering the Foreign Service as a career?*

DUEMLING: If he or she is seriously interested in the conduct—I stress the word conduct — of foreign relations of the United States, then the Foreign Service is the only real game in town. It is the number one area under the big tent. If the person is more concerned with being a policy-maker in the foreign affairs area, he or she will reach that goal faster by not coming in at the bottom of the Foreign Service and working your way up. You can reach that goal by going into the private sector—a bank or law firm—, mostly ingratiating yourself with a political figure who may wish to have you in his administration and will appoint you to be Assistant Secretary for Latin America Affairs. This may be a precarious journey, but it may catapult you into a policy-making position. If you are interested in policy rather than the daily fabric of the conduct of foreign affairs relationships, then don't go into the Foreign Service. If you are interested in the day-to-day application of policy and ultimately assisting with the formulation of the policy, because you do get that opportunity, but only in the mid-to-late parts of your career, then come into the Foreign Service. Don't come into the Foreign Service if you are expecting something else.



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End of interview